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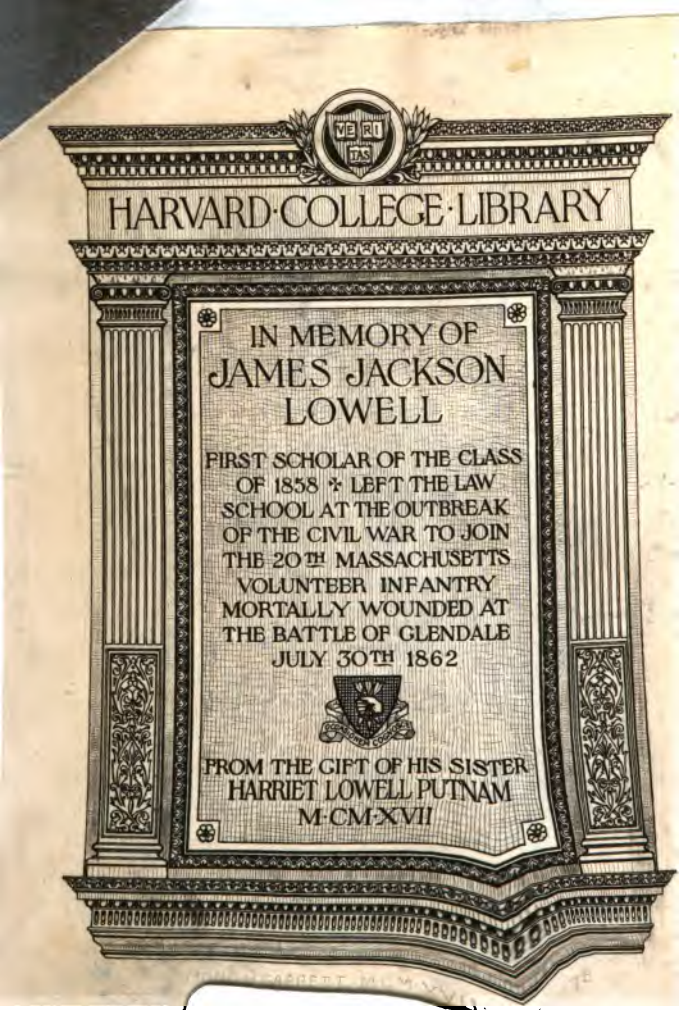
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NEWTON GOODRICH'S

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THE

# POETICAL WORKS

OF

## NEWTON GOODRICH,

Author of "The Martyrs of Myletene," "Raven Rockstrow," &c., &c.

---

Νυκτος—Αιθηρτε και Ἡμερα εξεγενοντο.—HES.

"Virginibus puerisque canto."—HOR.

---

Melbourne:

GEORGE ROBERTSON.

COLLINGWOOD: JOSHUA SHORT AND CO., 121 WELLINGTON STREET.

MDCCCLXXIII.

TO MY WIFE,

AS TO ONE

MORE LIKELY THAN OTHERS

TO EXCUSE ITS FAULTS,

THIS VOLUME

IS

DEDICATED.

# TO THE READER.

It will possibly interest some to know, that, the contents of this volume have been written, almost entirely, in the vicinity of Melbourne—that in a certain sense, and such as they are, they are Victorian.

It will *probably* interest *many* to observe (upon turning to the end of the volume) what a, comparatively, large number of patrons have been here ready to encourage the author by subscribing for his book.

For such encouragement his hearty thanks are due and he most heartily returns them, assuring all, that, while he lives he shall turn, often, with proud pleasure, to their names in its Subscribers' List—remembering their kindness.

To *ses amis*, John Fallon and James Crawford Leslie, he is indebted so for helping him to see it through the press, that, he would say a great deal of the kindness and ability and taste they have displayed did he not know that the sincerity of many words is like to be suspected.

Its faults, of course, are all his own, and would, he now thinks, have been fewer had he always listened to the counsel of his friends.

His purpose in composing "Pitman's Brief" was to exhibit, strikingly, the folly and the danger of indulging in resentment, but since the reader may decide that he has not succeeded (or 'reckon' that, in any case, the world has abler teachers), and he has no excuse for publishing which might seem better, it would be only weak impertinence in him to deprecate censorious criticism, and, so, with 'fear and trembling,' he submits his page (if haply it should prove of large enough importance) for their consideration who, in so few years, have raised the tone of the Victorian Press to its respected elevation and effect.

The *morale* of the minor compositions and of the 'selections' from "Married in Black" is, he hopes, all unexceptionable; yet, since their subjects are familiar, and, on their manner, merit, or demerit, it might not be, for him, quite wise to comment, even were prefaces, before-words, prologues, leading-of-from-speeches (*avant-propos*—Vorreden) *not* unread and voted tedious, he feels that, having said thus much (which seems so little) about his dreamy and romantic volume —*c'est tout dit.*

121 WELLINGTON STREET,

NOVEMBER, 1873.

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MELBOURNE.
GRIFFITH AND SPAVEN, PRINTERS,
FITZROY.

# Pitman's Brief;

OR,

# The Stebbington Mystery.

A DRAMATIC STORY.

# A DRAMATIC STORY.

# THE PERSONS.

ADAM HEATHCOTE, a wealthy Squire and Widower—Uncle and Guardian to SILVIA.

GEORGE, his Son.

FELTON, a Betting Man—by courtesy, called "Squire."

FRED, his Son.

HARRY STUKELY, at first, Factotum to FELTON,—afterwards employed elsewhere.

SIR JOHN BLACKBOURNE, a Justice of the Peace.

MORRIS MANSFIELD, a young Gentleman who turns Country Schoolmaster.

JEREMIAH PENDLEBURY, a Village Doctor.

AUGUSTUS SHRIVEL, an Attorney.

GALT, SIDDAL, } Turf acquaintances of FELTON.

LAWSON, a Card-sharper.

CALEB CLOD, a Farm-labourer, in the service of the HEATHCOTES.

ROGER ALLROUND, the Landlord of "THE PLOUGH" INN.

MOUSE, FEEDEM, JOE, } "PLOUGH INN" Stablemen and Grooms.

HUMPHRY DELLBROOK, Landlord of "THE FOWLER'S FORTUNE" Alehouse.

PARSON POMFRET.

PITMAN, a Barrister.

WELLPLED, another Barrister.

A COURT CRIER.

A JUDGE.

A CONSTABLE.

A SEXTON.

ANDREW, a Village Fiddler.

DICK,
BEN,
HUGH,
} Villagers.

ALICK, a Country-boy.

---

SILVIA HEATHCOTE, ADAM HEATHCOTE'S Niece and Ward.

MARGERY, ADAM HEATHCOTE'S Housekeeper.

MARA, Servant at "HEATHCOTE MANORHOUSE," and companion to MARGERY.

JULIA,
LAURA,
CARY,
} other Servants at "Heathcote Manorhouse."

NELL,
JESSIE,
JENNIT,
FLORA,
} at first, Servants at "Heathcote Manorhouse," and afterwards, elsewhere, in the neighbourhood.

LADY BLACKBOURNE, Wife of Sir John Blackbourne.

BERTHA, Daughter of the BLACKBOURNES—beloved by, and in love with, GEORGE.

POLLY, a General Servant at "FELTON LODGE."

LILLY, Sister to MORRIS MANSFIELD.

FANNY MANSFIELD, an Orphan Child—Morris and Lilly Mansfield's niece.

MISTRESS ALLROUND, Landlady of "The Plough" Inn.

DOL, a Maidservant at "The Plough" Inn.

DAME DELLBROOK, Landlady of "The Fowler's Fortune" Alehouse.

ROSE,
LUCY,
PHEBE,
SUKEY,
KATE,
BETTY,
NANCY,
} Village-girls.

MEG, a very young Country-girl.

MARTHA, one of the Sight-seers.

Officers, Soldiers, Villagers, Chorus-singers, Fiddlers, etc.

# PITMAN'S BRIEF:

OR,

# THE STEBBINGTON MYSTERY.

(A DRAMATIC STORY)

---

*The Scenes are in a hamlet, village, wood, and town which border Warwickshire and Leicestershire, and, as the curtain opens upon*

## ACT THE FIRST,

*A Military Band is heard distinctly playing, in quick time, "'Twas in The Merry Month of May," yet is so distant, and is heard so faintly, that, but for the beat of the Drum, the music would seem almost like a whisper from the Landscape which we see through the Door-and-Window-openings at the Back of*

SCENE THE FIRST.—*The Interior of a* KITCHEN *at "Felton Lodge," in Stebbington, on the borders of Warwickshire.—At the Left Second Entrance a Door—*

*between the Left Upper and Second Entrances a Dresser with Plates and Dishes, etc., etc. At the end of the Dresser, and facing us, a wide Window, and at the Back Left Centre a wide Door. At the Back Centre a narrow Cupboard. At the Back Right Centre Chairs and a Table, and above and behind the Chairs and Table another wide Window, through which, as through the Left Window and the Door, a pretty, sunny View of a part of Stebbington is seen. At the Right Second Entrance another Door. Between the Right Upper and Second Entrances a Fireplace and kitchen grate. An article or two of Furniture standing about, and culinary Utensils hanging on the Walls. In the Back Right-hand Corner are a Pump and Sink, and, as the curtain rises,* POLLY *is discovered, pumping water.*

*Polly.* [*as the distant Music ceases, leaving off pumping—exhausted*] O dear me!—[*to* CLOD *who, while she goes on washing up Tins and Crockery, is grinning comically, with just his head in at the Open Door*] Well, Ugly! what do *you* want?

*Clod.* [*drawlingly*] Ee, hee, hee!—I, er—I want —I, er—I come to see you, Miss Polly.

*Polly.* Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!—'*Miss*' Polly! Well I never! O, how pólite even a fool can be when he's in love! [*turning sharply round to him*] Well?—you see me, don't ye'?

*Clod.* [*still grinning*] E...yes,—but—but . . . .

*Polly.* Well?—'but' what?

*Clod.* I want to—to come in, Miss Polly.

*Polly.* Well, come in—can't ye'? What d'ye' stand grinning there for? [*as, with her back to* CLOD, *who is shuffling awkwardly in, she struts toward the front, smoothing down her skirts and admiring herself*] Umph! very proper too, when one comes to think of it!—'*Miss*' Polly!—why not?—Here, Clod! —come here,—I want to talk to ye'.—Do you know you're growing handsome?

*Clod.* [*grinning askance, sheepishly, at her*] Lor, Miss Polly?

*Polly.* [*sharply, and with affected seriousness*] You are, honour!—getting quite good-looking!

*Clod.* [*laughing at her slily*] Ah, but—er—what did ye' say jest now, Miss Polly?—now, did n't ye' say I was ugly?

*Polly.* O, but that meant handsome, Clod! We don't always *say*, ye' know, to the young men, what we mean—it would n't do.

*Clod.* Would n't it, Miss Polly?

*Polly.* Of course not.

*Clod.* Oh!

*Polly.* [*after* CLOD *has for some time looked at her silently, and with ridiculously mournful affection*] Now then! what are ye' staring at?

*Clod.* Ah!—[*riveting his gaze upon her lips—smacking his own, and wiping them with his cuff, and then opening his arms, as though about to embrace her, and sighing heavily*] cherries! !

*Polly.* [*starting back from him*] Hoity toity, man! why, you *are* in a hurry for the fruit! Come, come! let's have no more of that!—no love-making—it's against the rules, here! Twelve guineas a year, perquisites, hard work and no love-making—them's the bargain!

*Clod.* Is they, Miss Polly?

*Polly.* Yes.

*Clod.* How shocking!

*Polly.* What's shocking?

*Clod.* Why, about the love, ye' know . . . .

*Polly.* Stuff and rubbish! why, it's the silliest thing in the world!

*Clod.* *What* is, Miss Polly?

*Polly.* Why, love!

*Clod.* [*sighing sillily*] *Is* it, now?

*Polly.* 'Is it?' why, of course it is! Look here now, Clod—if my father and mother had n't made love to each other, should I have had to pump water and wash up dishes — eh?

*Clod.* Would n't ye', Miss Polly?

*Polly.* [*mimicking him*] 'Would n't I'—no, stupid! —can't ye' see it?

*Clod.* Not exactly, Miss Polly.

*Polly.* Ha, ha, ha! 'not exactly!'—Well, Clod, I should n't—and there's an end of it!—and that brings me to what I wanted to talk to ye' about—[*looking at him cunningly*] er—hard lines, being in service—is n't it?

*Clod.* [*shaking his head dolefully*] E...yes—it is —where they don't allow no courtin'.

*Polly.* Bother you and your courting, Clod! Here, [*fetching Chairs, and making him seat himself*] sit down, now, and talk to me like a sensible man.—How are ye' all gettin' on over at the Manorhouse—eh?

*Clod.* Well—fairish like—but then—[*sighing*] ye' see, *there* they *do* allow a *little* love, to—to—[*in a comic and dolorously sentimental manner*] to chair us on our lonesome day.

*Polly.* [*leaning forward, and staring with an expression of surprise and fun at him*] To what? to do—*what?*

*Clod.* [*endeavouring to correct himself, but still sentimentally*] To hear us on our lonesome say—er, n' no, to—er—shear us . . . .

*Polly.* Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!—why, Clod! you've been trying to learn some o' Master George's love-songs

to come a-courtin' with! But it's o' no use to bring that sort o' rubbish here—we don't encourage it.—Here! I suppose you want to kiss me, so kiss me and ha' done with it!—[*putting out her lips to him*] but [*withdrawing her lips as he is about to kiss her*] now mind! don't go and fancy you 're in love with me, for I would n't have one of you dashing, handsome young fellows for the world—there's no knowing when one's got ye'!—[*putting out her lips again*] now then!

*Clod.* [*twisting his head about—eying her lips adoringly—giving her a loud-sounding kiss, and becoming ecstatic*] Ah! !—cherries! ! !

*Polly.* [*wiping her mouth with her apron*] Umph! not so nasty neither,—dare say some people quite like that sort o' thing.—[*to* CLOD] I say, what d'ye' mean by cherries—eh?

*Clod.* Oh! it's something *so* beautiful! What Master George . . . .

*Polly.* O! some of *his* nonsense, is it? then drop it. —I say, Clod . . . .

*Clod.* E...yes?

*Polly.* He goes on courting Bertha Blackbourne, I suppose?

*Clod.* What, Master George? bless yer heart! quite strong.

*Polly.* Umph!—any other courtin' going on?

*Clod.* What, at our place?—no:—leastways, not as I know of.

*Polly.* The niece?—[*as* CLOD *seems, for a moment, lost in reverie*] I mean 'Squire Heathcote's niece—Silvia Heathcote—Master George Heathcote's cousin,—why, how stupid you are!

*Clod.* [*rousing himself*] Oh! ah!—Miss Silvia—Queen Sheber, as they call her?—Well, she *is* a good-looking 'n', ain't she?—No,—she's none o' the courtin' *sort*.—I've heerd [*brightening up a little*] as how your master, Squire Felton, wanted her for his son—young 'Squire Fred,' ye' know,—and folks *do* say, as your Squire Felton and our Squire Heathcote's mortal enemies now, 'cause our old Squire would n't let your young Squire have her: but Squire Heathcote did n't have nothing to do with it, rely on it. Miss Silvia Heathcote's got her own fort'n', and she'll do as she likes, any day.

*Polly.* [*aside*] He was in love, and as dull as a donkey, jest this moment—now, he's getting into scandal, and looks all the brighter for it,—how a bit o' gossip about one's neighbours does improve one, to be sure! [*aloud*] O, she will, will she?—well, I've heard she's a bit of a Tartar, and sometimes takes care to let the whole house know she's in it,—[*pauses—and*

*finds that* CLOD *hesitates and looks mysterious*] not that *I* want to know:—and, besides, I don't approve of servants encouragin' one another to talk about their masters. I'm sure, if I was a one to talk about employers, I could find enough to say about the people here.—[*aside—considering*] If I could only draw him out now, by telling him o' something that he does n't know about Squire Felton!—[*aloud—as the Military Band is heard playing, again, in the distance,* "'*Twas in the Merry Month of May,*" *and she and* CLOD *start up from their Chairs and look toward the Window at the Back Right Centre*] Good gracious! there's the Band coming round again!

*Clod.* [*as they run to the Door-way, and place themselves, one on the Right and one on the Left of it, outside, but so that we can just see an arm of each*] By Gums! so there is!

[*The Music, with the beating of the Drum, becomes—very gradually—louder. Then—louder still.—Louder.—Louder and Louder:—till—the Band, in Gay Regimentals, and with a great display of Feathers and Gold Braid and Ribbons, passes outside the Back-Right-Centre-Window, the open Door, and the Window at the Back Left Corner, surrounded by a rushing crowd of Country Children (who have among them a few Men and Women,) and with* FRED FELTON (*a dashing, sporting-look-*

*ing, open-faced fellow, about twenty years old) walking by the side of the* DRUM-MAJOR,—*while all are singing to the Music, as it continues—now, quite loudly—the same Air;—and when they have all passed and the Music has grown fainter—fainter ——fainter——till it has died away,* CLOD *and* POLLY, *who have stood a moment in the Doorway, looking after them, return reflective to their Seats.*

*Polly.* Ah!—there's my young Master, Fred, you see, tramping the village with that brandy-nosed Drum-major again,—and—mark my words, Clod!—he'll 'list for a soldier, yet!

*Clod.* Lor! d'ye' think so?

*Polly.* I'm certain of it!—not that I approve of servants talking about their masters, ye' know. As I was a-telling ye'—if I was a one to talk about my employers, I could find enough to say about the people here.

*Clod.* [*brightening into a boorish sort of cunning, and glancing, inquiringly, at* POLLY] I know!—Gamblers?—[*holding up his hands, and turning up his eyes*] ah!—shocking!

*Polly.* [*somewhat vehemently*] 'Gamblers!' 'gamblers!'—well!—I wish that was all, Clod—they might gamble as long as they liked for all I should care! No no, it isn't that as troubles me—because, they've a right to do as they like with their own, I suppose! but it's the company they keep—the nasty, horrid, ugly,

ill-looking blackguards that are always hanging about the house!—Not that I want to run down my master's friends—I'd be the last in the world to do it!—They call their-selves dog-fanciers, horse-dealers, sportin' characters, and so on, but, take my word for it, Clod, there's some of 'em that's a great deal worse than all that—[*looking round cautiously, and then turning to* CLOD *and speaking solemnly in his ear*] a *great deal* worse!

*Clod.* [*staring*] No?

*Polly.* But I say 'yes!'—And then, look at the beggarly doings over the house-keeping—why, they're as *poor* as rats!

*Clod.* [*in a drawl of wonder and doubt*] N...o?

*Polly.* I tell ye' 'yes!'—Why, it's always doubtful whether Bull, the butcher, 'll remember to send the meat in time for dinner, because the old bills have been left so long unpaid; and [*with an air of lofty contempt*] poverty's a thing I *do* despise! [CLOD *feels his pocket slily*] O, never mind ye' pocket, Clod—I was n't thinking o' such as you and I—poverty's nothing when you've got enough money!

*Clod.* [*musingly*] Ain't it, though, Miss Polly?

*Polly.* Of course not!—Here, I'll show ye' what I mean, Clod! Ye' know, Jenny Hornbuckle's got new

pink ribbons for the Dance to-morrow, and—by the bye, *she's* an extravagant minx, *she* is! what business has *she* spending her money for new caps? I'm sure her old one was good enough *for her!—I* mean to have new pink ribbons too—if I can't get the cap. . .

*Clod.* [*shuffling his Chair, lovingly, a little toward her*] Oh!—pink ribbons!

*Polly.* [*warning him to behave himself, by, archly, and silently, holding up her finger to him, and then continuing*] But, look y' here, Clod! I've *got the money* to *pay* for the ribbons—and that's more than Squire Felton had when Buckram brought home his last riding-pants, for, they're worn out, and not paid for yet, and row enough there's been about it, I can tell ye'!

*Clod.* Lor?

*Polly.* Yes. And then, there's my last quarter's wages, three pound three, bin owin' for this last two months:—not but what he'll pay *me*, no doubt—he always *does*,—me, and Nance, and the butler, as he calls him, Stukely, [STUKELY, *unobserved by them, is seen, for a few moments, at the Door, watching them, and listening,—and then disappears*] who, by the bye,'s not bad-lookin', and seems a respectable, straight-for'ard, clever young feller, only, to my thinkin', he's more like a man-servant of all-work than a butler.—

Yes, yes! Felton likes old faces better than he'd like new ones in our places, and, so, pays up, but I don't think he pays anybody else in the world.

*Clod.* Lor?

*Polly.* No.—Now, there's no such goings on as that over at the Manorhouse—eh, Clod?—[CLOD *hesitates*] not that I want ye' to talk about the affairs of the family, ye' know,—in fact I'd be the last in the world to encourage such a thing—I think it's very wrong. But—[*sighs*] heigh-ho!—*we* shall have another nice night of it, I suppose!

*Clod.* [*looking at her curiously and seriously*] Are ye' goin' out for a walk, then, Miss Polly?

*Polly.* 'Going out for a walk?'—no, stupid! I mean, Squire Felton's going to bring home, to-night, a parcel of his noisy, drunken, dirty, cursing-and-swearing companions—that's all! [*looking furtively at him*] Miss Heathcote don't swear when she's in her 'tantrums?'

*Clod.* [*staring with surprise at the question*] 'S...wear?'—Silvia?—Miss Silvia?—'swear?'—why—she'd as soon think of—of—of holding her tongue!

*Polly.* Umph! is that such a wonderful thing, then, for any woman to think o' doing?

*Clod.* Well—n...o, Miss Polly,—perhaps not. [*looking at her lovingly*] They're *very* nice—is the ladies.

*Polly.* Of course they are, and that makes me wonder what in the world people talk against Silvia Heathcote for. Though nobody sees her—or next to nobody —somebody talks about her,—they say she's a devil.

*Clod.* [*with some warmth*] Then they say a lie!

*Polly.* Do they, Clod?—then, come! tell me all ye' know about her, that's a good fellow! because, it's a shame, ye' know, that people should be scandalized in that way and not have the whole truth told about 'em. Come now! [*rising*] you shall have a glass of ale, and I'll shut the door, and [*as she closes the Door and fetches a small Table to the middle of the kitchen*] you shall tell me all you know about Silvia Heathcote, and her uncle, Squire Adam Heathcote, and . . . .

*Clod.* [*who has also risen to make place for the Table*] But there's nothing to tell, Miss Polly:—*I* don't know nothing.

*Polly.* [*coaxingly, as she shuts the Door, and brings the Ale*] O, yes, ye' do!—[*as she seats herself at one side of the Table*] Come! you must rub up your memory!

*Clod.* [*as he bends himself slowly to his Chair at the other side of the Table*] Why—ye' see—it's a good many years ago since she come to the Manorhouse —and—I was n't there.

*Polly.* [*impatiently*] No—but you've *heard* something about it, I suppose?

*Clod.* [*slowly*] Well—ye' see—Miss Silvia Heathcote's—Adam Heathcote's—niece....

*Polly.* [*fidgeting with impatience*] I know, I know! well?

*Clod.* Well—ye' see—Miss Silvia's father's name was Heathcote.

*Polly.* I suppose so.

*Clod.* [*after taking a long draught of the Ale*] Silvia's father was Squire Heathcote's brother—and—when that brother died—it's like "The babes in the wood," ye' know—he charged the Squire, awfully, to take care o' the young 'n',—and—[*with comical tenderness*] Oh!—I can't!—it's too....

*Polly.* [*disappointed—snappishly*] Go on, ye' fool! can't ye'? why, its bea...u...tiful! regular romantic!

*Clod.* [*dolefully*] No, Miss Polly—please I'd rather not:—but, if ye' 'll let me skip and go on, I don't mind tellin' ye' what the Squire and his niece is a-doin' *now*.

*Polly.* Well—what?

*Clod.* Why—a-quarrelling.

*Polly.* Yes?

*Clod.* A-quarrelling awful!

*Polly.* What about?

*Clod.* Why, ye' see, Miss Silvia's got her own fortune like . . . .

*Polly.* I know . . . .

*Clod.* And she's quite independent o' the Squire—leastways she will be; and she thinks he wants to be too much master, and he thinks she wants to be her own mis'ess too soon;—d' ye' see?

*Polly.* Yes—well?

*Clod.* Well, for this last twel'month things are bin goin' on from bad to worse atween 'em, till, at last, they've reached such a pitch that I've overheerd a quarrel or two as 'u'd shake the nerves of a stronger man nor Caleb Clod, *I* can teli ye'!

*Polly.* Umph!—nothing about sweethearts, then, eh?

*Clod.* Lor, no!—Squire Felton 'd have liked her fortune for his son Fred, and Fred 'u 'd have liked to have the fortune, only he don't like to marry—but, bless yer heart! *she* wouldn't have anything to do with *your* folks, and her uncle wouldn't *like* her to have: and, then, ye' see, her uncle don't want her to marry his son, George, because, her cousin George 'll have a good match with Justice Blackbourne's daughter—her as they say your Squire Felton—the father, I mean—

wanted so to have for his-self, ye' know:—besides, Miss Silvia never cared anything about her cousin George—leastways not in the lovin' line. In fact people *do say* as the only thing Miss Silvia likes is her cousin George's sweetheart, Bertha Blackbourne—Justice Blackbourne's daughter, ye' know, as I'm a-talkin' of, and . . . .

*Polly.* [*after waiting a few moments*—CLOD *seeming to have, suddenly, lost all his ideas*] Well?—what else?

*Clod.* 'What else?'

*Polly.* Yes—what else about the quarrels?

*Clod.* Nothing else.

*Polly.* [*disappointed and vexed*] 'Nothing else?' do ye' mean to say you've heard nothing else?

*Clod.* Well, ye' see, Miss Polly, they don't quarrel before the servants.

*Polly.* No, but I suppose the servants can listen—can't they? [*rising and tossing her head scornfully*] At least, I know that *proper* servants *do*.

*Clod.* [*rising, and considering*] E...yes—perhaps they do,—but.....

*Polly.* 'But . . . . ?'

*Clod.* I shouldn't like Miss *Silvia* to cotch *me* listening—that's all!

*Polly.* Umph! I suppose not. [*aside*] How shall I get rid of him? [*aloud, after a moment's consideration*] I say, Clod?

*Clod.* E...yes?

*Polly.* I'm going down into the village to buy my pink ribbons, and I want some nice young fellow to 'scort me, and . . . .

*Clod.* [*eagerly*] When?

*Polly.* Now. What d'ye' say—will ye' go?

*Clod.* What, me?

*Polly.* Yes.

*Clod.* [*putting himself in an attitude, and looking solemn affection*] Oh! Miss Polly!—this *is* . . . .

*Polly.* [*sharply*] Out with it!

*Clod.* [*with drawling tenderness*] the happiest day I've known—[*louder, and in a sort of tearful extasy*] since I got over the measles!

*Polly.* Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! [*tripping off through the Door at the Right Second Entrance*] well, then, don't cry about it!—there! wait a moment—I shall be back presently!

*Clod.* [*who, still stupid and ecstatic, has gazed upon the Door during* POLLY'S *momentary absence, —sighing*] Ah!

*Polly.* [*returning, with her Hat and Neckerchief on*] 'Ah,' what?—come, come along! off we go!

[*As* CLOD *ridiculously cavaliers her out through the Back Left Centre Door, faint, quick Music ("Fairlop Fair, O!") is heard.*

*Clod.* [*while the Music is still more faintly continued, returning, in a few moments, out of breath through running, and looking about astonished*] Polly!—[*looking in the Cupboard and up the Chimney*] Polly!—Why—by Gums! she's gi'en I the slip! —Well, if that's a-comin' a-courtin'....! But I must n't be seen here, alone—it 'll look suspicious!—[*rushing out as the Scene commences shifting*] Oh, the little devil!

SCENE THE SECOND.—*An Old-fashioned* ANTE-CHAMBER *in "Heathcote Manorhouse."—At the Back Right Centre, a Door. Doors at Right and Left Upper and Second Entrances. A Window, with diamonded casements, in the Back Left Corner, at an angle oblique to us. A Fireplace between the Right Upper and Second Entrances. A Table between the Left Upper and Second Entrances. A Screen standing round the far side of another Table and a Chair. Chairs, etc., about the apartment; and Pictures, Antlers, etc., on the Walls. The Screen is at the Back of the apartment, and stands at a right angle—its farther 'fold' presenting a flat surface*

*to us, and forming a passage between itself and the Back Wainscot, a little to the left of the Back Right Centre Door.*

*Silvia.* [*heard, almost before the Scene is settled, speaking very loudly, outside of the Antechamber*] Oh! no doubt, no doubt! What is there that you *would not* do to gratify your paltry wish to bend me to your will? [*to Squire* ADAM HEATHCOTE *who, in Silver-braided Blue—Knee-breeches, and Broad Silver Shoë-buckles—with a Three-cornered, or 'cocked,' Hat in his hand, follows her as she enters decked with Jewels and in a Handsome Long-trained Dress (Canary-coloured, trimmed with Mauve), by the Back Right Centre Door*] There! you had better go and execute your threat than follow me about!

*Heathcote.* [*fixing his eyes fiercely upon her, and speaking in a deliberate but bitter tone as they stop in the middle of the Antechamber*] So so!—'t has come to this!—Do you remember—hussy!—that it is to *me* that you are talking thus?

*Silvia.* [*contemptuously*] O, *I* remember! the 'hussy' *will* remember.

*Heathcote.* [*raising his voice in passion*] 'Hussy' *again!*—what better are you—you, who, for some base reason, known only to yourself, are hourly destroying the content of my once peaceful home?

*Silvia.* I?

*Heathcote.* Yes, you!

*Silvia.* 'Tis false!

*Heathcote.* [*vehemently*] No no, 'tis true!—*too* true!

*Silvia.* [*even more vehemently*] I say, again, 't is false! and I say, too, 't is cowardly to set up such pretence to excuse your tyranny!

*Heathcote.* [*almost storming*] Silence, girl!—'False?' is it false that you have but this moment indirectly called me—*me*—a liar? coward? tyrant?

*Silvia.* [*resuming her scornfulness*] 'Girl!' 'girl' again!—[*in a louder, mocking, tone*] O! is it false, pray, that you are even now endeavouring to frighten me to the belief that I am still a child?

*Heathcote.* [*imitating her disdain*] And, pray, what are you *but* a girl? [*in a tone of angry inquiry*] would you, if mine, dare to assert the contrary?

*Silvia.* [*still contemptuously*] 'Yours!' had I been *yours* I *had* been less, perhaps, in my last 'teens,' a woman.

*Heathcote.* [*with great violence*] Insolent prater! *meanly* insolent that you are! you know I so remember my poor brother that I am powerless to retort that insult, and . . . .

*Silvia.* [*interrupting him*] In saying so you own my wit is older than a child's.

*Heathcote.* In *wickedness* you're old enough! [*in a loud tone of determination*] but, mark me!—*here* I'm master!—*here* the rule is mine!—and to that rule—that *just* rule—you *shall* bow until the law releases you!—[*lowering his voice significantly*] if you should ever live to see that day.

[JESSIE, *one of the maidservants, is seen stealing from behind the Screen away through the Back Right Centre Door.*

*Silvia.* [*imitating* HEATHCOTE'S *significant tone*] Were I a coward I *might not* live to see that day. [*with an air of desperate resolution*] At all events, I cannot and I *will* not live like *this*, for nearly two years more—so help me, H--v-n!

*Heathcote.* [*threateningly*] Nor I, girl! and a power you think not I possess shall aid to alter this.

*Silvia.* [*moving off slowly and haughtily towards and through the Left Upper Entrance Door*] O! you'll do your worst, no doubt!

*Heathcote.* [*violently—following her—his voice, outside, retreating rapidly though gradually—so*

*that his last broken phrase becomes almost inaudible*] I'll save myself from insolence I don't *deserve* and will not *bear*—from hourly disturbance by one—I say it again—who has, for months past, striven to force from me my rightful power and self-respect—making such sacrifice the only price for bare exemption from these vulgar brawls at home, and scandal, perhaps, abroad! —Once, and for all, will you forego this . . . .!

*Silvia.* [*without—in a tone of great violence, but, as at a considerable distance*] Never!!

*Jessie.* [*stealing back, cautiously, in at the Back Right Centre Door, by which she had escaped*] Gone!

*Nell.* [*who, with like cautiousness, has come in after* JESSIE] Is n't it dreadful?

*Jessie.* Shocking!

*Nell.* I wonder what in the world they're quarrelling about now?

*Jessie.* O, about nothing!

*Nell.* Lor?

*Jessie.* Nothing, in the world, worth speaking about, Nell:—it's jest this—one says something, and then the other says something sharp; and then the first one something sharper still, that makes the other say something quite violent: and so they go on, each one trying to say something more aggravatin' than the other:—

there! it's a fight, to see who shall be master, and that's all about it!—Why, what d' ye' think *I* think 's the cause of all *this* 'bobbery', now?

*Nell.* [*quickly, in a tone of eager expectation*] Lor! *I* don't know, Jess?

*Jessie.* [*with an air of mystery*] Well—nothing, on earth, but that County Ball that's a-coming off, you know. The last, it seems, was n't very respectable, and *I* fancy the Squire's been saying Miss Silvia should n't go this time:—but that, you know, 's the very reason why she would go; and, in fact, it's the only reason, for she does n't *care* about dances—more shame for her!

*Nell.* [*in solemn amazement*] Lor! d' ye' think that's it?

*Jessie.* [*solemnly and slowly*] I—do—Nell:—but I ain't sure, mind!—*they* was a-talking and *I* was a-listening—[*rapidly and in an altered tone, as though daring any one to suspect her*] I was n't a-listening o' purpose, you know....!

*Nell.* [*interrupting her quickly*] O! of course not!

*Jessie.* [*continuing, solemnly*] ... and jest as I was a-thinking they would n't come this way—they *did!*—and so—as I could n't get out through the door without being seen—I—had to get behind the screen, and ....

*Nell.* [*with great excitement*] O...h! that *was* nice! and you heard everything, and ....

*Jessie.* [*snappishly*] Did I? no I did n't!—[*as if ready to cry over the recollection of her recent cowardice*] I was that frightened that I could hardly hear a word!

*Nell.* [*sorrowfully disappointed*] L...or!—what a pity!

*Jessie.* [*stamping her foot with an exulting sort of spite*] There was one thing I heard, though, that 'll be worth telling!

*Nell.* Ah? what was that?

*Jessie.* I heard ....

*Nell.* Yes?

*Jessie.* I heard Squire Heathcote ....

*Nell.* [*impatiently*] Yes, yes?

*Jessie.* I heard Squire Heathcote say ....

*Nell.* [*scarcely able to contain herself*] Yes? I'm a-listening! go on, for goodness' sake!

*Jessie.* [*hesitating*] but—but—I hardly know what he *did* say.

*Nell.* [*disappointed again, contemptuous, and tossing herself round*] O, pother!

*Jessie.* [*mysteriously*] Listen!

*Nell.* [*getting excited again, and glancing, awe-stricken, round the Antechamber as she inclines her head toward* JESSIE'S] Yes?

*Jessie.* [*solemnly*] He said . . . .

*Nell.* [*in a loud, rapid whisper*] Tell me quick, Jess, for pity's sake!

*Jessie.* [*still slowly and solemnly*] Something—like —this . . . .

*Nell.* [*in breathless suspense*] Yes? like what?

*Jessie.* [*continuing, very slowly, and still more solemnly*] Like—that—Miss Silvia 'u'd—never live—to have her fortune!

*Nell.* [*seeming to faint in* JESSIE'S *arms*] O...h! hea...vens!

*Margery.* [*after standing for a few moments, in sorrowful stateliness, at the Back Right Centre Door —by which* JESSIE *and* NELL *entered—as ghostly or witch music, greatly subdued, is heard*] A-hem!

[NELL, *hardly yet fallen into* JESSIE'S *arms, recovers, with ridiculous alacrity, and runs, with* JESSIE, *off through the Right Second Entrance Door, and old* MARGERY, *sadly, and with a great deal of natural dignity in her carriage, crossing the Antechamber, passes out through the Left Second Entrance Door, and the Scene is altered into*

SCENE THE THIRD.—*A* BEDCHAMBER, *simply, but elegantly, furnished, in "Heathcote Manorhouse."—At the far end of the Chamber, at the Back Left Centre, there is a Bed, with its foot toward us. At the Back Right Centre there is a Window, with diamonded casements, reaching to within a foot of the ground, through which Window there is seen, a Garden, and beyond the Garden there is a distant View of the Surrounding Country, with a Church in the half-distance—and Clouds, now and then, floating across a bright Moon, so, that, the Chamber is sometimes flooded with Moonlight and is sometimes in Shadow.—At the Back Right Centre—to the right of the Window—there is a Table. Between the Left Upper and Second Entrances a Fireplace. Between the Right Upper and Second Entrances a Toilet-table, with a Looking-glass and two or three Books, etc—a Footstool, two or three Pictures on the walls and two or three Chairs making up the rest of the furniture. The Chamber-door is at the Left Second Entrance.*

[*Alone, in this Scene,* SILVIA *is discovered, with her Hat carelessly swung to her wrist by its Ribbons and her figure completely enveloped in a Dark Cloak. She is sitting at the Back Right Centre, with her elbow on the Table and her chin in her hand. She is looking out upon the Night, and is, for some time, silent.*

*Silvia.* [*rising, and going, leisurely—as* GALT *is, for a moment, in the moonlight, plainly seen examining her Chamber through the Window—to the Door, at which some one is knocking modestly*] Who's there?

*Jennit.* [*outside*] Only me, Miss!

*Silvia.* [*without opening the Door*] O!—nothing more to-night, Jennit, thank you !—good-night!

*Jennit.* [*in a cheerful, kindly tone*] Good-night, Miss Silvia!

*Silvia.* [*soliloquising, slowly, with a sad smile, as, after waiting a few moments, listening, she returns to her Chair and seats herself*] 'Good-night!' [*sighing*] Ah !—if all the salutations that we speak, as the day opens, or the flowers close, were *thought* and *meant!*——'Good-night!' 'good-night!'—how many who will never see the morn have had, this hour, this 'good-night' wished to them!——Well, well! 't is sweet, perhaps, to wake up in the Better World with Love's last blessing lingering on our ear!——'Good-night!' 'good-night!' —the shelterless will wish whom they *know* shelterless, 'good-night!'—The robber wishes his companion, as they part, each to his wickedness, 'good-night!'—The drunkard hickups it! The mother prays it with her cheek upon her child's! The dying artist, in yon little cot with the dim night-light, listening for eternity, hears his nurse chirping it to Gossip Green!—and George and Bertha, parting at the stile, amid the oak-leaf shadows, sigh it between kisses !—[*after a long pause*] What a strange world of wakeful pain, and drunken lethargy, and prowling crime, and folly, and prayer-curtained sleep yon pale moon looks upon! and———Hark!

*Choristers.* [*faintly heard, singing in the distance*]

Awake, my Love! the day 's in crimson dawning—
The birds shake sparkling dewdrops from the boughs!
The flowers are opening fresh for thy adorning,
[*Fainter still*]
And I, impatient, would renew my vows!
Awake, my Beautiful! and let me be
[*Chorus dying away*]
Once more thrice blessed in beholding thee!

*Silvia.* [*listening as if to catch another sound, and then smiling*] How sweetly sounds this singing of the morning in the night! 'Tis the poor Village Choir, returning from its practice for the Fête. How musical is joy!—and, sometimes, sorrow, too, they say!—[*as a few more notes of the Chorus are heard*] Again?

*Choristers.* [*as their voices increase in loudness and seem to come nearer and nearer until they are heard distinctly but as though still somewhat distant*]

Awake, my Love! such joys are thee awaiting
As, ere thy sleep, made earth to us seem heaven!
[*Fainter*]
Look forth, the rosy Morning's life elating
With grateful gladness by thy presence given!
[*Fainter still*]
Awake, my Beautiful! and let me be
Once more thrice blessed in beholding thee!

*Silvia.* [*when the voices have died gradually away, and after a pause*] I envy ye—ye simple ones! your

rough lightheartedness! [*seeming to become very sorrowful, and weeping—then, seeming agitated by half-stifled sobbing—and then growing calmer, till—after another pause—is heard a distant Church Bell, striking, slowly, and deeply, Ten O'clock, as she rises, dries her tears, and speaks in a low tone*] The clock strikes ten! All, here, are now at rest, save *one*—and she 'll, here, *rest*—no more!

[*As slow Music ("In the Lonely Vale of Streams,") is heard, she rises—steps toward the Bed—and standing with her back towards the Window (through which, now,* HEATHCOTE, *unobserved by her, is discovered in the Garden, looking sternly in the direction of her Chamber) disengages from her wrist her Hat-strings—throws her Hat upon the Bed—takes off her Cloak—and is seated on the Bedside when commences gradually the interval of almost Total Darkness during which the Scene is changed to*

SCENE THE FOURTH.—*The Borders of* STEBBINGTON FOREST *by intermittent Moonlight.—A little way before the Back Right Centre there are Bushes of underwood, stretching off to the Right. At a short distance a beautiful View of "Heathcote Manorhouse," surrounded by Thickets and open, Cultivated Country.*

*Galt.* [*a low-looking fellow in a Velveteen Coat, Cord Riding-'pants,' Wellington Boots, a Slouched*

*Hat, a Yellow Neckerchief, etc., with a Bludgeon under his arm—coming in at the Right Second Entrance and turning and looking back as though watching for some one*] You 're slow, my beauties—slow !——Well !—we must wait!—[*taking a Pistol from his pocket and examining the priming*] The Cock wo'n't show fight, I think,—and if he *does*—why, so far as I could learn, [*looking at the Pistol*] he has no spur like this.—[*putting back the Pistol—seating himself upon the trunk of a felled Tree, and taking out a Pipe, and preparing to smoke*] I must improve the time.

*Siddal.* [*in a Countryman's Hat and Smock-frock, Lace-up Boots, and Grey Stockings, coming in—after* GALT *has been for some time smoking—by the Left Second Entrance, in haste, and starting back as* GALT *springs to his feet*] Hul...lo!

*Siddal.* & *Galt.* } [*in a low-toned chuckle, after grinning at each other silently for awhile*] Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

*Siddal.* Why, what, the d——l, are you doing here, Galt?

*Galt.* Smoking my pipe.—What, the d——l, have *you* [*indicating with his thumb the Thicket out of which* SIDDAL *has just come*] *been* doing *there*, good Siddal?

*Siddal.* [*taking him by the arm to hurry him off*] Come along away, my Precious! come!

*Galt.* [*with a scrutinizing look*] Eh?

*Siddal.* Quick!

*Galt.* [*somewhat sternly*] Where?

*Siddal.* [*impatiently*] Anywhere, from here!

*Galt.* [*angrily wresting himself loose*] Thunder and blood! let go!—and go yourself!—unless you choose to stay and help me!

*Siddal.* [*inquisitively*] Eh?—[*with a significant nod toward the Trees at the Right Second Entrance*] Who are your expected tributaries, then?

*Galt.* A man and woman, and a child—strangers about here—going into service at some place where no one knows them—somewhere in Leicestershire. They mean to catch the coach at Ortwell, by making a short cut this way. They'll be here presently.

*Siddal.* [*recollecting his own affairs again*] 'Here?' but you dare n't stay here, Galt . . . . !

*Galt.* [*interrupting him impatiently*] 'Dare n't?' *I* . . . . !

*Siddal.* [*quickly and anxiously, but soothingly*] Be quiet, Precious;—[*indicating, with another motion of his head, the Thicket he himself came out of*] I've

had a little difference here, just now, with a good woman (such a 'plucked' 'n'!) who didn't wish to lend her purse and jewels upon interest without security. [*showing some articles of Jewellery*] I got the 'stuff,' and—she....

*Galt.* 'She?'

*Siddal.* Sunk through the earth—it seemed. But there! she 's off to tell the shoulder-clappers, who were already wanting, perhaps, to see me, where she has met with me, and how they 'll, maybe, find me.—Come, come along!—*you* are not dying to see *my* friends just now, and here.

*Galt.* [*hesitating*] But why not kill....

*Siddal.* With one stone two fat birds?—*your* bird ain't here, and we may wait much longer for it than 's convenient or safe,—[*looking in the direction of the open country*] for I don't see your visitors a-coming. —Come, don't be rash,—we 're known, you know, as "Siddal, Galt, and Company," and if they find *you* where and when *I*'ve forced a loan it won't be jolly for the *Firm*.

*Galt.* [*giving way*] Umph! Well—of course the *Firm* shares *profits?*

*Siddal.* Of course!—[*showing his Booty again*] Look here,—a heavy purse, some trinkets, and—*one*

little beauty that's worth all the rest.—[*handing* GALT *a Ring*] Here, look and weep—with joy.

*Galt.* That? why, it's only a ring!—[*examining it curiously*] what some people 'u'd call a pretty and a droll 'n'—but only a ring!—that?

*Siddal.* Yes, that;—it's worth all the rest, I tell ye'.

*Galt.* Well—it's a *droll* 'n'.

*Siddal.* It *is* curious — *very* curious! — but that *sparkler* in it?—eh?

*Galt.* [*looking inquiringly at him*] A diamond?

*Siddal.* Yes.

*Galt.* Are ye' sure?

*Siddal.* Well, now—do you think I've handled odds and ends o' this sort so long and don't know a real one when I see it? [*turning and staring for a moment in the direction of the Left Second Entrance, as though he heard some one on his track, and then running off through the Right Second Entrance, followed by* GALT] look out!

*Morris Mansfield.* [*appearing, after a few moments, with* LILLY MANSFIELD, *and little* FANNY—*three years old, about—(all in Deep Mourning), at the Right Upper Entrance, and looking across*

*toward the Wood-path at the Left Second Entrance*] This is the opening, Lil.

*Lilly.* [*in the tone of a sharp, and somewhat wilful, but kind-hearted girl*] Oh, I can't go in there, Morris —we shall be lost!

*Morris.* Not we! The wood has been most accurately described to me. That path is almost straight, and ends our journeyings—on *foot*.

*Lilly.* But there must be a better way than this! I tell you I can't go!

*Morris.* [*drawing, with gentle force,* LILLY *and the Child toward the entrance of the Wood-path*] We *must*,—we 're not obliged, you know, Lil, to keep on if we 're not inclined to do so, but let 's see what it 's like, at all events.

*Lilly.* The child 'll *cry*, mind! and we shall be attacked . . . .!

*Morris.* [*interrupting her as, while slow Music is heard, he takes up the Child, and all three enter the Wood-path, and disappear*] By idle fancies, if we listen to you, Lil.

[*Then, as the Music (tremulous) continues, the Scene is shifted into*

SCENE THE FIFTH.—*Another, and a darker, portion of The* WOOD.—*The shimmering Moonlight is strug-*

*gling, here and there, in little patches, through Deep Shadows, and the black figure of a* WOMAN *(in the darkness, just distinguishable) is sitting near the Right Second Entrance (with her face turned from us) on a green Hillock, and reclining, wearily, against a Tree-trunk.*

*Woman.* [*as the Music ceases—more closely covering her hat and face in with her Hood—gathering her dark Cloak closer round her—and speaking between pauses*] How slowly seem to creep the hours to those who watch in pain!—How little of an hour's length know those who daily fit themselves for peaceful slumber by the sweet weariness of joy!—and what a weight of woe is needed to press out only a passing thought of Time's drear drag—or fleetness!—The woe, however, is not wanting—soon or late it comes to each and all. —[*after a long silence*] How thought is warped to inconsistency by pride! We fly to deserts through o'erweening love of social-life distinction, and keep with crowds to sing our sighs to be alone.—Seclusion's singularity 's a bid for note; and friends and honours but befool us to presumptuous discontent and morbid dreams of peace in isolation—as, now, I know too well.—Dwellers apart, power-seekers 'mid the throng, scorners of both—are lackers, all, of truth-craft. The Cell is substituted for the Life its thought should regulate. The Babels of vain wisdom scorn the Cell's *fair* use.

Wit stands between and, pointing to the extremes, laughs with the recklessness which is a still more fatal folly.—Oh, if none dared to hope save with humility how few might look for help where *now I* cannot!—[*after another long pause*] Theirs is the better part whose cares are few, and duties pleasures, in a social guild where complaisance is power—power which but wills the gladness round it, and leaves the fame-world to its o'ergrown self-esteem and selfishness.—Might not such part —be mine?—[*sobbing—becoming calmer—remaining for some time silent, with her face buried in her hands—and then raising her head again and smiling bitterly*] 'Return?'—the *scullery-maid* would laugh at me! [*as the Scene becomes darker*] no, no!—[*after another pause, during which the Scene keeps darkening*] 'Could I forgive him?'—yes, perhaps, the wrong *he* has done, or I have fancied he has done, toward *me*—but—'t would not be quite easy to forgive him wrong *I*'ve done toward *him*.—How wickedness doth double its defect in hating what 't hath injured!—'Hate?'—hate *him*?—*hate* him? *hate* him? oh, God! no! I do not *hate* him! If I could hate him, then I could go back, perhaps, and for awhile dissemble! [*weeping*] No no, I do *not* hate him!—[*when a Flash of Lightning has been followed, after an interval, by distant Thunder*] Ah?—the storm within me's

answered by the storm without,—this, then, will be a night I shall remember!

[*Then several long pauses are broken by heavy Thunder-claps, following Vivid Lightning, one of whose Flashes discovers, through an Opening at the Back Right Centre, behind the* WOMAN, LILLY *passing along a Footpath.—Then, for a time, there is Darkness and Silence,—and then the Thunder rolls nearer and nearer, and the bursting of a Terrific Storm takes place.*

*Lilly.* [*appearing at the Opening, with little* FANNY *in her arms, wrapped in a Dark Shawl*] This way, Morris!

*Woman.* Help!

*Morris.* [*seeming to have not heard the* WOMAN] No no, it was further on.

*Lilly.* [*also seeming to have heard no voice besides their own*] I tell you, it was here!

*Morris.* Well—careful, Lil—we must n't lose the path.

*Lily.* [*handing* FANNY *to him*] Just take the child, then, and stay there. [*coming a step forward, through the Opening—and starting back a little as the* WOMAN *rises*] Here!—Morris!

*Woman.* [*as* MORRIS, *stepping forward, too, puts* FANNY *down, and pauses*] Friends?

*Lilly.* Certainly!—Alone? are you alone?

*Woman.* [*her face—as from first to last throughout this Shadowy Scene, by reason of the Darkness and her Hood—quite hidden from us, and her tone quiet, though she is agitated*] I am.

*Lilly.* Good heavens!—what brought you here at this late hour?

*Woman.* I am a traveller, and understand that through this wood's the nearest way to Ortwell:—I'm going there.

*Morris.* Why, so are we,—but *you* are off the path.

*Woman.* [*slowly and dejectedly*] I've just been robbed here,—and—in flying from the miserable footpad, through fear of farther harm—I fell—and got confused—and lost my way.

*Morris.* [*turning, and pointing to the Opening at the Back Left Corner*] And yet the path is here—close to you.

*Woman.* [*examining the Pathway indicated*] I see;—I did not think I was so near it. I searched and wandered till I was too tired to do more. [*as, at the moment when she is looking at the Opening and has her back toward us, a Vivid and Continuous*

*Lightning-flash lights up their faces to each other and (with the supervening Darkness) a shivering Thunder-crash transfixes them*] Merciful Powers! [*when they've, all four, moved backwards, as from the Lightning, toward us, and she is standing (with her face averted from us, and her head, again, almost enveloped in her Hood) near to the Front Right Centre, as though watching* LILLY, *who is further back, between her and the Upper Entrance on the Left—aside*] There's something good about this girl, I think—I like her look.

*Morris.* [*aside—excitedly—at the Front Left Centre—holding* FANNY'S *hand, and looking round at the* WOMAN] Good Heavens!—why, she is like an angel!—Oh, that the light, e'en though but lightning's light, would show those eyes again!—It was but for a moment—yet—what beauty in a face!—and if 'tis not an honest one I ne'er was more deceived! [*to her, aloud, as she is about to go towards* LILLY *and he turns away a step or two after her with* FANNY] I—er—you—may, er—may I presume that you are willing—er—willing we should—er—all go together?

*Woman.* Yes;—the sorrowful, they say, sympathize:—the plight you've found me in is not an enviable one, and *you*, I see, have on the signs of grief. [*bending down to* FANNY] This little one . . . . ?

*Morris.* Has lost both parents.

*Woman.* [*turning to* MORRIS *and* LILLY *alternately*] Indeed?—and you . . . .?

*Morris.* Brother and sister are—the poor child's aunt and uncle :—our name is Mansfield.

*Woman.* 'Mansfield,'—[*bowing, thoughtfully and sorrowfully, her head a moment—then stooping tenderly again to* FANNY] poor little one!—and will you kiss me? [*kissing the Child*] I was an orphan, too.

*Lilly.* [*aside, to* MORRIS, *while the* WOMAN *turns away and weeps*] She 's *good,* I think?

*Morris.* [*also aside, and rather sharply*] Of course she is!

*Lilly.* [*still aside, and a little surprised at* MORRIS'S *manner*] 'Of course?'—umph!—I wonder *who* she is?

*Morris.* [*in the same under-tone, but quickly and earnestly*] You must n't *think* of *asking* her:—she 'll tell us as we go, perhaps.

*Woman.* [*drying her eyes as she turns toward them*] I'm ready, friends.

*Morris.* [*while the tremulant Music is heard, taking* FANNY *and leading the way toward the Back Left Corner*] This way, then, please.

[*And then, as into the dark Thicket they pass, slowly, and faintly rumbles the already distant Thunder, the tender Music 's modulated into "Cease your Funning,"—and so comes*

SCENE THE SIXTH.—*A Large Open* SPACE.—*It is a beautiful spot, almost circular, in a Wood of Oaks which surround it with their shadows and which form a canopy overhead. An Opening at the Back Left Centre gives a distant View of a Village, on rising ground, with its Church-spire, etc. On the Trees, from the Back Centre to the Back Left Corner, are displayed the National Flags of England, Ireland and Scotland, and wreaths, etc., are hung tastefully about. Rustic Benches are placed round as seats for Dancers. Against a Bush on the far side of the Right Upper Entrance, a little way from the back, there is a small Table, with Drinking-horns, Jugs, etc., for refreshments.*

[*For a little while the merry laughter of* BERTHA BLACKBOURNE *and* GEORGE HEATHCOTE *is heard; and then* BERTHA, *in a long, blue, graceful Dress, and wearing a Hat and large Feather, runs, laughing, from among the Trees at the Left Upper Entrance, across the Scene, and disappears at the Right Second Entrance, followed by* GEORGE *in the dress (Black Knee Boots—Hat, with a Broad Brim, sharply curled, etc) of a rich young Squire.—Then they return, still running, and* GEORGE *catches her in the middle of the Scene and, with just a little resistance on her part, kisses her.*

*Bertha.* George! [*gently and playfully boxing his ears*] how dare you? [*as* GEORGE *laughingly attempts*

*to kiss her again*] Be quiet, I tell you!—there's somebody coming!

*George.* [*having suddenly relinquished his hold and looked about*] You puss!—there's nobody!

*Bertha.* [*laughing*] Well, there *will* be, and it's all the same.

*George.* [*nodding his head merrily, and seeming ready for another spring after her*] Ah, I see!—no objection if nobody's looking—*that's* it.

*Bertha.* [*watching him keenly, and sportively, as he steals closer to her*] Now!—you dare . . . . !

*George.* [*following her as she turns and runs off, by the Left Second Entrance, among the Trees*] By all means, if you wish it, dear! *I'll dare!*

[*As* GEORGE *exclaims "I'll dare!" and disappears after* BERTHA, SQUIRE FELTON, *a 'fast'-looking man of about thirty years of age, with a sinister countenance, (dressed in Yellow-top Boots, White-cord Knee-breeches, a Dark Cut-away Coat, and a Black Broad-brimmed Sharp-looking Hat with a Stiff Tapered Crown and a rather conspicuous Buckle in its Band) is, for a moment or two, seen, at the Right Upper Entrance, looking, with a scowl of hatred and jealousy, across toward the Left Second Entrance, as though he saw* GEORGE *and* BERTHA *among the trees—and an indistinct sound of Many Voices is heard.—Then* FELTON *disappears*

*and the Voices are heard nearer, laughing, shouting, and singing the Chorus of "Waggoners Whistle,"—and then (led by* POLLY) ROSE, LUCY, PHEBE *and a large Troop of gaily-dressed Villagers (in the midst of whom are* ANDREW *and two other comically-dressed Fiddlers) come, talking, full of fun and frolic, and noisily pushing on to the Scene, from behind the Bush against which stands the Table.—By the Right Second Entrance, through the Trees, enter, as the Chorus gradually ceases—*SIR JOHN BLACKBOURNE, *a stately-looking gentleman of forty, in a Plum-coloured Suit, with Knee-breeches, Black Silk Stockings, Silver Shoe-buckles and a Broad-brimmed Hat—*LADY BLACKBOURNE, *a buxom, dressy dame of about the same age—*DOCTOR JEREMIAH PENDLEBURY, *in Comical Oldfashioned Black, with Knee-breeches, Grey Stockings, Shoe-buckles and a small 'cocked' Hat—*AUGUSTUS SHRIVEL, *a middle-aged, sinister-looking, stooping Attorney, also in Black, but shabby—*FRED FELTON, *and—*HARRY STUKELY, *somewhat older than* FRED, *lithe, handsome, and quietly dressed like a gentlemanly Gamekeeper.*

*Almost before they are all well upon the Scene,* BERTHA, *pursued by* GEORGE, *re-enters, still running, and falls, with a little cry of surprise and fright, plump into* PENDLEBURY'S *arms.*

*Pendlebury.* [*as, recovering herself,* BERTHA *starts back from him*] Gracious heavens! what's this?

*Villagers.* [*laughing loudly and long, but affecting to point all their ridicule at* GEORGE] Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

*Fred.* Why, the prettiest girl in Warwickshire, Doctor—if Master George will allow *me* to say so?

*Phebe.* [*aside, and contemptuously, to her companions, who look as though they hardly think it*] O—dear?

*Rose.* Umph?

*Lucy.* Well, I'm sure!

*George.* [*shaking hands with* FRED, *and endeavouring to recover from his confusion, while* BERTHA *stands looking as though she scarcely knows what to do with herself, and* SIR JOHN *and his Lady smile, and* SHRIVEL *grins maliciously, and the Village-lads laugh, and the Village-girls go on making dumb motions of disapprobation*] How d'ye do, Master Fred? all well at the 'Lodge?'—er . . . .

*Fred.* We're all right, thank you, and as merry as . . . .

*Lady Blackbourne.* [*interrupting him*] Bertha Blackbourne—ha, ha, ha! [*to* BERTHA] There! don't stand looking like that, girl! you shouldn't *do* what you're ashamed of, that's all! [*to the Villagers who are placing the Fiddlers and arranging themselves*] Come, lads! come, girls! on with the dance!

[*As the Fiddlers 'strike up' "Sir Roger de Coverley" the Dance (by all, except* SHRIVEL, PENDLEBURY,

SIR JOHN *and his Lady) begins*—BERTHA *and* GEORGE, *recovered from their confusion, joining in it.*

*Sir John.* [*glancing with a smile at his Lady's feet, which have for some moments been moving restlessly, and then looking her kindly in the face*] *We—used* to do this sort of thing, dame? [*as she looks up at him archly*] Nay, you look as though you'd like to try it again? [*after a moment's hesitation, seizing hold of her and dancing in among the rest*] Here, come along!

*Villagers.* Hooray! Three cheers for Lady Blackbourne, Hooray! hooray! hooray!

*Stukely.* [*to* PENDLEBURY, *who joins him willingly and capers frolicksomely*] Come along, Jeremiah! off we go!

*Fred.* [*dragging into the Dance,* SHRIVEL, *who looks horror-stricken, and flounders about with the most laughable awkwardness*] Now then, Augustus—show 'em how to do it!

[*Then,* STUKELY, *who has danced the* DOCTOR *out of breath and is for the moment without a partner, slips out, unperceived by the rest, at the Left Front Grooves, and is, shortly afterwards, followed by* POLLY.

*Clod.* [*rushing in, almost breathless, when the Dance is nearly finished and hallooing at the top of his voice*] He...ere! he...ere! stop ye' dan...*cin*'! stop ye' dan...*cin*'! [*as the Dance stops*] What d'ye' think? what d'ye' think? Miss, er—[*stopping to get breath*] Silvia's, er—gone and, er—[*very loud*] bol...*ted*! [*sobbing and bellowing*] O...oo...ooh! hoo...oo...oo ...oo...ooh! There...'s *sich*—a—row—*up*—at th'—*Man*orhouse! *ev*...ery *bod*...y's a...*cry*in'! and *ev*... ery *bod*...y's a-*look*in' for her! and *ev*...ery *bod*...y in th' *world*—'s a-bustin' wi' *grief!* and you're *all*—to *go* an'—*help* 'em! O...oo...oo....!

*Sir John.* [*stepping in a dignified manner up to* CLOD, *and laying his hand upon his shoulder, and interrupting him*] Silence, man! [*as* CLOD, *recognizing him, falls on his knees, and clasps his raised hands as though supplicating pardon*] Is Miss Heathcote missing?

*Clod.* [*beginning to bellow again*] O...ooh yes, Sir John! she's—gone an'—cut, an', er....!

*Sir John.* [*hastily striding, amid the tumult which now drowns* CLOD'S *voice, from the Scene*] To the Manorhouse, friends! [*stepping back, as* LADY BLACKBOURNE, PENDLEBURY, FRED *and others hurry away past him, and beckoning somewhat sharply the Attorney*] Shrivel!—with us; we may want you!

*Shrivel.* [*bowing, fawningly, as he follows* BLACKBOURNE] At your service, Sir John.

*Bertha.* [*who has become ill through the news, and has, for the moment, seated herself near the Table, as the Crowd, surrounding* CLOD *and vociferously questioning him, huddles out behind the Table and the Bush*] You had better leave me, George,—of course you are impatient to be with them—to learn your cousin's fate.

*George.* Nay, dearest, I cannot leave you till I've seen you safe at home.

*Bertha.* [*placing her hand, sorrowfully, in his*] What else has poor Clod told them?

*George.* That she had, last night, in her own bed never slept, and that the casement was found open—that they suppose she left just before midnight—that no one missed her till within this hour, and that my father had not thought about her.—You do not know, perhaps, that she, of late, has kept her room till mid-day, seeing no one?

*Bertha.* No—[*after a moment's hesitation*] but I'm not surprised to hear you say it—[*weeping, and with increased bitterness, as she proceeds*] she has of late affected so these solitary habits, and is so changing —changed—in features, too—that, as you know, I've told her (though jokingly, I fear with too much truth)

that when she seeks her old acquaintances again they'll hardly know her. [*sobbing*] Some time ago—I thought her motive—partly—was—to avoid the Feltons—but —I was mistaken,—retirement—was, on her part—needless,—*they*—were avoiding *her*. It is a long while —since she saw—or son or father,—[*sobbing more violently*] they'd hardly recognize her—now, perhaps! [*becoming somewhat hysterical*] Oh, Silvia! Silvia! —my poor, dear Silvia!—I—now know—how I've—loved you!—[*recovering herself a little, after another prolonged silence, and rising, slowly*] We'll try to reach the house, George.

*George.* [*tenderly, while, just audibly, the slow Music of "All in the Downs" is heard*] Yes,—if you're better, Bertha.

[*As the Music continues,* BERTHA, *affectionately supported by* GEORGE, *slowly leaves the Scene by the Right Second Entrance, and the next moment, as the Music is modulated into "The Young May Moon",* STUKELY *and* POLLY *re-enter at the Left Front Grooves.*

*Polly.* [*sharply, as she re-enters with* STUKELY] Well—look here, Harry Stukely! if it had n't 'a' bin that this queer case of [*imitating* CLOD] 'bol...*ted*!' as poor Clod calls it, has put all thoughts of fun out of one's head you 'd have had the length of my tongue,

*I* can tell ye'! A pretty thing, indeed! to make me lose the best of the Dance just to hear about your going down into Leicestershire! For my part I thought you'd something serious and important to say to me!

***Stukely.*** [*sighing*] And is my going away, then, really of no importance to you, Polly?

***Polly.*** How should I know? [*aside*] Confound the fellow! why can't he ask me at once to be his wife? what the plague's he frightened at? [*aloud*] Besides, haven't I been told before, and often enough, about your going? and couldn't you have said 'good-bye' after the Dance?

***Stukely.*** [*seriously, and a little sheepishly*] But, Polly, dear, you know, the feasting was to follow—and —so—I feared there'd be no chance—at least no chance of saying farewell—sacredly.

***Polly.*** [*aside*] Umph! that sounds better—though even now he's beating about the bush. [*aloud and deridingly*] *What?* of *what?* of saying 'farewell'—*what?*

***Stukely.*** [*hesitating, and looking rather disconcerted and foolish, and seeming somewhat pained*] I meant—I—er—want to ask a favour, Polly.

***Polly.*** Ask away, then.

***Stukely.*** Meet me to-morrow morning, at sunrise, in the meadow, and . . . .

*Polly.* [*sharply, and merrily, interrupting him*] With swords and pistols? all right! who's afraid? ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

*Stukely.* [*deprecatingly*] Nay, but Polly . . . . !

*Polly.* [*interrupting him again*] Nay, but Harry! what the plague would you do there, and then?

*Stukely.* Er—well, Polly !—I—er—might drive the dun cow home for you, and—er—might tell you something—er . . . .

*Polly.* [*archly*] About the dun cow, eh? I sha'n't then,—I mean, that, you sha'n't meet me there—for I suppose that, go *I* must, as usual,—but, man alive! I thought you were to start for Leicestershire *to-night*?

*Stukely.* Yes, but I hardly like to go without first aiding the searchers for Miss Heathcote:—she will be found to-night, perhaps, or to-morrow; and if she is not I shall leave Stebbington to-morrow night.

*Polly.* [*making for the path behind the Bush and Table*] Well, come along!—we can't stay talking here!

*Stukely.* [*earnestly, as they disappear while the Air of "The Misletoe Bough" commences*] But, Polly! you must hear me now, or grant this interview! I cannot go away without first telling you that . . . .

[*And, so—the Music growing, quickly, louder—the Curtain falls.*

# ACT THE SECOND.

SCENE THE FIRST.—*The* STABLE-YARD *of "The Plough" Inn, at Stebbington, late in the afternoon.—At the Right, Left, and Back (all round the Yard), there is an Open Gallery (or Balcony), with turned Wooden Balusters, supporting a Hand-rail which is between two and three feet from the Gallery-floor. The Gallery is supported by old-fashioned, turned, Wooden Pillars —and on the Right there is a flight of Wooden Steps leading away up to it from the Right Second Entrance. At the Back Right Centre, under the Gallery, there is a Booking-Office, with a Drinking-Bar, the lower Window-sash of which is thrown up, discovering Gilded Bottles, Pewter Pots, Measures, Glasses, etc. At the Back Left Centre, under the Gallery and under a portion of the upper apartments of the Inn, there is an Arched Carriage-way through which are seen the Houses on the far side of the Main Street and, on its Right-hand side, the Pole and parts of the fore Wheels of a Stage Coach.—Doors and Windows of Rooms all round the Gallery open on to it. A Clock in the Centre, against the Gallery-balusters, points "Twenty Minutes to Six."—On the Right, under the Gallery and partly hidden by the Steps, a truss or two of Hay are seen, and, a little behind the Hay, and standing partly under the Gallery, a Gig with its shafts on the ground, and, in the Back Left Corner, at the side of the Arched Carriage-way, a Pump, Pails, etc..—A Barrow, a Broom or two, with Horse-collars, Harness, etc., are standing or hang-*

*ing about—some of them upon or against the Pillars and the Walls under the Gallery. A Broom is leaning against, and its handle is projecting over, the Gallery-rail, near the Clock, and a Pail, near it, on the Gallery, is seen through the Balusters.—The Gallery on the Right and the Houses seen through the Archway are in Early-evening Sunshine—the rest is in Warm Shadow.*

*Joe.* [*polishing the Mountings of a Set of Harness which hangs against the Wall, under the Left Gallery, toward the front of the Scene, and singing*]

Waggoners whistle while emperors weep—
Few 've special cause to complain, boys!
Up to the standard your courage still keep—
Fortune is fair in the main, boys!
Peggy's as pretty as sceptred Therese!
Hodge eats fat bacon as fast as a king!
Honours don't always continue to please!
Heroes are all who can jollily si...i...ng—

*Mouse.* [*as, with a Pail of Water and a Chamois-leather he polishes up the Gig, on the Right—singing with Joe, in the Chorus*]

Rumti idity, heigh gee wo,
Rumti idity, heigh gee wo!
Rumti idity, heigh gee wo,
Rumti idity, heigh gee wo!

*Feedem.* [*coming, through the Archway from the Street, with his Shirt-sleeves rolled up and a Pail in*

*his hand, to the Pump, and beginning to pump water as he calls out*] I say, Joe!

*Joe.* Hullo?

*Feedem.* That's a 'rum go' about Squire Heathcote's niece—ain't it?

*Joe.* [*rubbing away at the Harness*] Well, I suppose it is,—who is it says she's bolted?

*Feedem.* Everybody:—why, she didn't sleep in her bed last night!—leastways, when they went into her room they found her bed made, and all that!

*Joe.* Ah—made it herself, and went out for a walk, I dessay!—I wouldn't mind bettin' a small wager as she's stowed away comfortably in some corner about the place, a-studyin' "Jack, the Giant-killer," or something o' the sort, and 'll be found quite innocent and surprised like, when they tell her she's looked for,—I understand she's a "rum" 'n'. What sort of a *looking* chap is she?

*Feedem.* [*sauntering forward to a Barrow that stands half-way between himself and the others and seating himself on the edge of it*] I'm 'blow'd' if I know, and there's the joke of it:—when they come to send the people to look for her there was nobody as thought they'd know her if they was to see her.

*Mouse.* [*leaving his work at polishing the Gig, and slouching toward* FEEDEM] That be hanged for a yarn!—why, look here, Feed—wouldn't you know her now?

*Feedem.* No:—that is, not to be able to swear to her.

*Mouse.* You wouldn't?

*Feedem.* No.

*Mouse.* Why, I thought you'd seen her often?

*Feedem.* Yes—but not lately,—and the last time I see her I hardly knowed her again.—I'll tell ye' what it is, Mouse—the gals grow so fast, and come to be women so quick (a-gettin' beautifuller and beautifuller every day) that, I'm 'blow'd' if a feller *could* swear to 'em—unless he could live with his arm always round their waists, a-lookin' at 'em,—[*sportively touching* MOUSE *in the ribs with his finger*] eh, old feller?

*Joe.* [*singing*]

Waggoners whistle while emperors weep—
Rumti idity heighdo!

*Mouse.* Well—*somebody* knows her—it's all 'gammon,' ye' know! For instance—don't the Feltons know her?

*Feedem.* Less than anybody, perhaps,—they got so snubbed when Felton proposed for her for Fred—such good reason for 'fighting shy' of her—that, I don't think they've, either of 'em, seen her face since,—and, it seems, the difference between her face then and her face now's something more than the difference between a gal's and a woman's.—Of course *Fred* 'u'd jest know her, I suppose, but the *old* 'n', they say, never saw her more than once, and *never* spoke to her, and would n't trouble himself to find her if he could.

*Mouse.* Well, then, there's the Blackbournes?

*Feedem.* The old 'n's knowed her well by hearsay (and who did n't?), but that's about all.—The fact is, there's 'a screw loose' somewhere up at the Manor-house, and for the last year-an'-a-half the gal's bin very shy and mopish, and has n't seen any one hardly, and, from all I can understand, I don't think anybody *does really* know her, beyond the cut of her figure and her clothes, except it's Squire Heathcote and Master George and the servants and Bertha Blackbourne and, perhaps, Fred Felton,—and, as she's 'wide awake' and 'plucky,' how, the d——l, they'll find her, if she don't want 'em to, 's more than I know.

*Joe.* [*still polishing the Harness-mountings*] Any '*cove*' in the way, Feedem?

*Feedem.* What, as she's 'sweet' on?, lor, no! there ain't the least occasion to think o' sich a thing!

*Joe.* Well, then, she'll be home afore night—if she ain't somewhere about the premises a' ready.

*Feedem.* [*laughing*] Why, that's what everybody's a-sayin',—unless she's gone a-sticklebaggin' and tumbled into the .... [*in a lower tone, to* MOUSE, *as* SIDDAL, *dressed as a somewhat coarse Sporting Character, comes sauntering through the Archway and up the Yard*] Here comes the friend as put ye' on to the right horse, as turned out to be the wrong 'n', last Derby day, Mouse! [*passing* SIDDAL *(as* JOE *resumes his singing) to go to the Pump and take up his Pail and be off through the Archway round into the Street*] Good evening, Mr. Siddal!

*Siddal.* Good evening! [*turning to* MOUSE] D' evening Mouse!

*Mouse.* [*civilly, but not cordially*] Good evening, Mr. Siddal.

*Siddal.* Has Squire Felton been here this afternoon?

*Mouse.* I have n't seen him,—[*turning to* JOE] have you, Joe?

*Joe.* No,—I don't think he's been here—[*humming*]

Rumti idity heigh gee wo!

*Mouse.* [*joining in with* JOE]

Rumti idity heighdo!

*Roger Allround.* [*waddling his Corpulence, Scarlet Breeches, White Apron, etc., out from the Booking-office Bar and meeting* SIDDAL *who is sauntering back towards the Archway on his way out into the Street again*] D' Evening, Mr. Siddal!

*Siddal.* [*with a nod, as he continues his way out*] Evening!

*Allround.* [*without paying further attention to him, dawdling up the Steps and leaning over the Rail of the Gallery and joining* JOE *and* MOUSE *in their singing—while Porters hasten in to the Booking-office and carry Boxes, Parcels, etc., from it to the Coach—and* MISTRESS ALLROUND, *the Jolly Landlady, appears at the Window of the Booking-office Bar, wiping Glasses and bustling about—and Passengers are seen in the Street gathered round the Coach, with parcels in their hands—and* DOL, *a Serving-maid, coming through one of the upper Doors, takes the Broom and sweeps the litter of the Gallery-floor up to one end of it—and Ladies and Gentlemen, in Travelling Cloaks and Coats, with Bandboxes, etc., in their hands, come through the Doors on to the Gallery and slip money into the hand*

*of* DOL *who is waiting for them—and the Coachman (with his whip in his hand) and the Guard come sauntering up the Yard, in close conversation, followed by* FELTON, *who is followed by* GALT *(dressed as in Stebbington Forest but sprucer) and* SIDDAL *(also in conversation)—and* FEEDEM *comes back to the Pump for water—and the Coach is moved across the Archway until are seen only parts of its hind Wheels, round which a crowd of Village-Boys gathers—and all, as they appear, quickly, one after the other, chime in merrily, and swell the Chant*]

Waggoners whistle while emperors weep—
Few 've special cause to complain, boys!
Up to the standard your courage still keep—
Fortune is fair in the main, boys!
Masters are daily more valuing men!
Labour 's all now-a-day glory to bring!
Work for good wages don't kill one in ten!
Play 's never wanting to wights who can si...i...ng—
Rumti idity, heigh gee wo,
Rumti idity, heigh gee wo!
Rumti idity, heigh gee wo,
Rumti idity, heigh gee wo!

*Joe.* Bravo, us!

*Mouse.* Encore!

*All.* Encore! Encore! Encore!

*Allround.* [*joined, in the singing, by everybody—including the Boys outside the Stable-yard, in the Street—while, with the Travellers, he comes down*

*from the Gallery, and bows to* FELTON, *and shakes hands with the Coachman (who nods a 'Good-bye!' to* MOUSE *and* JOE*), and all leave their occupations and go out into the Street to see the Coach start*]

Waggoners whistle while emperors weep—
Few 've special cause to complain, boys!
Up to the standard your courage still keep—
Fortune is fair in the main, boys!
Doctors don't physic the moneyless gay!
Lawyers their fees from Content rarely wring!
While true parsons tell us to carol away!
And so, for all reasons, we 'll merrily si...i...ng—
Rumti idity, heigh gee wo,
Rumti idity, heigh gee wo!
Rumti idity, heigh gee wo,
Rumti idity, heigh gee wo!

[*As the others pass to the Back, and out into the Street, and disappear,* SIDDAL *and* GALT *come forward and beckon* FELTON, *who joins them, and talks with them inaudibly but angrily.*

*Felton.* [*heard as the Chorus becomes less loud*] I tell you I'll not talk to you just here and now, standing apart, and stared at by the others.

*Galt.* [*as the Chorus becomes fainter still*] Where *are* we to talk to ye'? You 've told us not to come to your house, and, if you had your way, ye' would n't be seen in a field with us, I suppose, [*after pausing and looking at* FELTON *significantly*] though, as to *that*

(the *field* I mean), time was when ye' wasn't so particular. *I* understand ye', I *think*, Master Felton.

*Felton.* [*after considering anxiously a moment, and as the Chorus becomes almost inaudible*] You can spend an hour here, this evening, without its seeming that you meant to meet me here?

*Galt.* [*as the Chorus ceases*] Yes.

*Felton.* Be here in two hours' time then.

*Galt.* [*nodding assent*] *We*'ll be here.

*Siddal.* [*drawing* FELTON *aside, under the Gallery, and speaking to him impressively*] Don't fail us—and do bring the money that we've mentioned: you'll go back richer than you'll come. And if you feel inclined to disappoint us—think—of the ugly grave [*pointing to himself and then to* FELTON] we dug some eighteen months ago.

*Felton.* [*hastily putting his hand before* SIDDAL'S *mouth and then turning and walking away down the Yard*] Hush!

*Siddal.* [*beckoning* GALT, *who goes off with him*] Come along!

*Dol.* [*on the Gallery—raising herself up from behind the Balusters, and standing a moment as if lost in thought*] So so!—'You'll go home richer than you'll come?'—Ah! some gambling affair, *I*'ll be bound!

they say they're always gambling—that lot!—But—'think of the ugly——dug eighteen months ago'—and something, that I couldn't catch, between 'ugly' and 'dug!'—Perhaps it was *dog, not* 'dug?'—'Ugly dog'—ah, *that*'s it!—But, no—it was 'dug',—and something, after 'ugly', that I missed.—Umph!—what a bother!—Perhaps it *was* 'dog' after all?—Con... found 'em!—Well!—I *should* have liked to hear all that they had to say!—but it's something about their horse-racing tricks, I suppose; and what has eighteen months ago to do with me?

*Mistress Allround.* [*from the interior of the Inn*] Dol!—You Dol...y!—Dol...y!

*Dol.* [*as she goes away into the house through one of the Doors on the Gallery*] Coming! coming!

[*Then, two or three bars of "Waggoners whistle," are heard, faintly, as the Scene changes into*

SCENE THE SECOND.—*An Old-fashioned Wainscoted* APARTMENT, *in "The Plough" Inn, at Stebbington.—A number of Chairs, of an old, uniform pattern, are formally placed around. A long Table stands lengthwise across the Scene, near the Chairs at the Back. On the Walls hang—a Bellrope,* FELTON'S *Hat, some Sporting Prints, and a Portrait or two. On the Table two Candles are burning. At the Back Right Centre there is a Door.*

[*As the Curtain rises* FELTON *is discovered, facing us, leaning back in a Chair, on the far side of the Table, with his hands in his pockets, frowning, and lost in thought.*

*Felton.* [*soliloquising*] The parson tells us to give up our sins,—but—will our sins *give us* up?—mine, like touched pitch—stick,—they *won't* give *me* up.—Umph!—why, a man's an ass to—er—tell a lie—even a little lie to sweeten a brat's physic—sin, once begotten, grows so!—[*after a pause*] They say a man can't get to heaven by good deeds—now, I doubt it—that's if there is a heaven. Why, if my last act—only my *last*—only one—had been—we'll say—to save some girl in danger, from disgrace—or snatch her starving mother from the grave—shouldn't I be more fit to listen to a choir of angels, or less afraid to say my prayers? But—steady! you'll get bewildered, Robert Felton—grow weak, and, then...[*after another pause*] Well, well! to say a black sheep must be always black may n't be Church-gospel—but it's mine,—*my* faith is from the teachings of the world.—[*after another, longer, pause*] Blackbourne and Heathcote, curse 'em! thought us poor, and thought we should remain so. One refused Fred his niece—the other, me, his daughter. They would n't spoil their pride in their superiority by making us their equals. And *how* refused?—oh! curse 'em!

curse 'em!—It would have been some solace if Heathcote's niece had not been found,—but *that*'s denied me —I am told she *is*.—[*after another, and still longer, pause*] This won't do—[*ringing the Bell*] my business with Galt and Siddal must be got over quickly, [*taking out a Betting-book and feigning to occupy himself with it*] or Lawson will be here before he's wanted.

*Allround.* [*coming in at the Door, in answer to the Bell*] Servant, Squire.

*Felton.* [*looking up from his Betting-book*] Oh!—er —brandy-and-water, Allround, please! [*smiling when* ALLROUND *has gone out and closed the Door after him*] Let me see!—Yes—*that*'ll manage it!—[*after pausing, as* ALLROUND *brings in the Drink, and, till* ALLROUND *is about to retire again*] Er—Allround!—er—anything fresh to-day about Nash's 'bay filly?'

*Allround.* Well—no—I think not. There's a good deal of talk, you know—but with nothing, that we didn't know, in it.

*Felton.* [*putting on an anxious look*] Umph!—who's here? any one? any one in the parlour?

*Allround.* Well—er—there's Galt and Siddal, and—er . . . .

*Felton.* [*interrupting him, eagerly, and with affected surprise*] Galt and Siddal! Are they engaged? What are they talking about?

*Allround.* [*smiling*] Well, about the 'filly,' Squire —everybody's a-talking about the 'filly.'

*Felton.* Umph! [*in a friendly manner*] Well—er —look here, Allround!—er—couldn't you—presently —er—give them my compliments, and—er—ask them to drink a glass and smoke a pipe with me?

*Allround.* Certainly!

*Felton.* Tell them I want to speak to them—particularly.

*Allround.* [*as he goes out and closes the Door after him*] I will, Squire—I will!

[*Then* FELTON *sits, for some time, alone, leaning back in his Chair, with his hands in his Pockets, and his chin on his breast, thinking—till the Door opens and* GALT *and* SIDDAL, *each with a sardonic grin on his countenance, enter, and* FELTON *with his hand indicates in a careless and vague manner that there are Chairs if they choose to be seated and (as they saunter round the Room, affecting to examine the Pictures on the Walls) rings the Bell.*

*Felton.* [*turning to* ALLROUND *who reappears at the Door in answer to the Bell*] Er .... [*then to* GALT *and* SIDDAL] Beg pardon,—er—what's it to be?

*Siddal.* O—I'll do as you're doing, Squire!—brandy-and-water, ain't it?

*Felton.* Yes.

*Siddal.* [*turning to* GALT] Galt?

*Galt.* [*nodding, as he seems to be still examining one of the Pictures*] We'll all do alike. [*swinging a Chair to the Table and seating himself (his right side toward us) at the end next the Door when* ALLROUND, *with something between a nod and a bow, has left the Room*] How long have ye' bin here, Felton?

*Felton.* Not long. [*to* SIDDAL] There, get a chair, Siddal, and look sociable, if you ain't so—till Allround's gone again, at all events!—Here, let's have this Table out an inch or two!—[*after the Table is pulled out a little way*] So—that'll do:—*now*, Siddal!

SIDDAL *slouches across to the Side of the Room and taking hold of a Chair drags it to the Table as* ALLROUND, *returned, puts a Tray, with Tumblers and Pipes, upon it. Then,* SIDDAL *places his Chair in front of the Table, a little to the Left of* FELTON, *and, as* ALLROUND *leaves the Room, seats himself with his left side toward us, while* FELTON *goes to the Door and locks it and reseats himself.*

*Felton.* [*with his face buried in his hands, and his elbows on the Table*] Well?

*Siddal.* Did ye' bring the money?

*Felton.* [*still with his face buried in his hands*] Your *business?* What do you want with me?

*Siddal.* Did ye' bring the money?

*Galt.* [*as* SIDDAL *and* FELTON *(who has raised his head) sit looking angrily at each other*] There, out with it, Siddal! no shilly-shallying!

*Siddal.* [*to* FELTON] You don't *know* our business?

*Felton.* What you told me I know.

*Siddal.* And guess the rest?

*Felton.* Perhaps,—what is it?

*Siddal.* [*glancing at the Door*] We sha'n't be overheard?

*Felton.* No; nor interrupted:—Allround understands we want to be alone—but thinks we are on Turf-business.

*Siddal.* [*taking from his Pocket a little Parcel—casting it roughly on to the Table, toward* FELTON *—and leaning carelessly across to untie it*] Well *—there!*—we want thirty pound:—they're worth a hundred. I told you, friend, you'd go home richer than you'd come.

*Felton.* [*turning over some Trinkets which the Parcel contains and then looking earnestly at* SIDDAL] Where did you get these?

*Siddal.* That's our business.

*Felton.* [*pushing the Parcel from him*] T
—your business—to yourselves.

*Siddal.* [*looking sternly at him*] Eh?

*Felton.* [*angrily*] Do you think I'm ass
meddle, then, with things which, for augh
may have been . . . . [*pauses an instant*]

*Galt.* [*dryly*] Prigged?—frightful thoug

*Felton.* [*continuing his own sentence*] .
from my nearest neighbour?

*Siddal, & Galt.* [*feigning amusement at the of such a thing*] Ha! ha! ha

*Galt.* [*still laughing*] Your nearest
friend, must live a long way off to make that

*Felton.* [*somewhat sternly*] Where di
them?

*Galt.* O—five-and-twenty miles from
Siddal?

*Siddal.* [*sulkily*] Nearer thirty.—[*to F*
*nificantly, after a stern silence during u*
*has sat looking at the ground*] You mean
*never did* engage in dangerous business,
begin it?

*Felton.* [*as if with some unpleasant r*
*which makes him uneasy*] What can *I* do

*Siddal.* Turn 'em into money.—[*picking out, from among the Trinkets, the Ring*] Why, this alone 's worth three times what we're asking ye' for!

*Felton.* [*first, greedily examining the Ring—and then becoming thoughtful*] And can't *you* . . . .

*Siddal.* What?—turn 'em into money?—well—we can't—just now,—and—there, that's all about it.

*Felton.* It's more in your way than in mine to do so, at all events.

*Siddal.* [*in a conciliatory tone*] Well, perhaps it is; but, look here, Felton—you've done this sort of thing for us before, and why not now?—why, because you're getting nervous,—but ye' needn't be so,—and we sha'n't ask ye' agin,—there! [*as* FELTON *shrugs his shoulders*] oh! ye' needn't shrug ye' shoulders—we sha'n't have no occasion to,—[*nodding significantly to* FELTON *as the latter looks up at him in surprise*] going to travel—[*to* GALT, *as* FELTON *looks from one to the other incredulously*] eh, Galt?

*Galt.* True as death.

*Felton.* Where?

[*A dead silence, for some time, during which* FELTON *seems to be calculating deeply.*

*Felton.* [*muttering to himself*] Twenty pounds....

*Siddal.* [*hastily, and rather loudly, correcting him*] Thirty!

*Felton.* [*after a pause*] I haven't it.

*Siddal.* [*sternly*] Felton?

*Felton.* [*doggedly*] Well, I can't spare it.

*Siddal.* [*fiercely*] We want thirty pound!

*Felton.* [*after another long silence*] You can have twenty-five—no more.

*Siddal.* [*still threateningly*] I tell ye' we want thirty!

*Felton.* [*with sullen defiance*] You wo'n't have what you can't have—it will be twenty-five—or less—if you have anything.

[*Again, a long pause.*

*Siddal.* [*after looking inquiringly at* GALT *who nods assent*] Here! let's have the money!

*Felton.* [*gravely and deliberately tying up the little Parcel and putting it into one of his Pockets*] Who's the receiver?—[*to* SIDDAL, *as the latter seems to ask* GALT'S *permission by a look and* GALT *nods assent again*] you?—umph!—[*taking the Money from another Pocket—counting it—and pushing it toward*

SIDDAL] twenty-five.—[*unlocking the Door—ringing the Bell—and speaking in a less sullen tone*] And now we'd better empty, perhaps, these glasses—ask for the cards—and play for nothing—for the sake, you see, friends, of appearances—our sitting, else,'ll seem *too* serious and business-like. [*to* ALLROUND, *who enters in answer to the Bell*] The cards, please, Allround! and more grog!

[SIDDAL *and* GALT *get up and stretch themselves—and talk apart,—and* FELTON *turns over the leaves in his Betting-book—till* ALLROUND *returns (with Glasses for four, and the Cards) followed by* LAWSON, *a knowing-looking 'Gent' of six-and-twenty, rather 'horsey' in appearance, and a little over-dressed.*

*Felton.* Hullo, Lawson! why . . . .!

*Lawson.* I've taken the liberty, you see, of . . . .

*Felton.* Don't mention it,—we're . . . .!

*Lawson.* [*to* GALT] 'D evening, Galt!

*Galt.* Good evening.

*Lawson.* [*still speaking to* GALT, *but nodding to* SIDDAL] I'm afraid I shall be in the way, and am sorry to . . .'.

*Felton, Siddal, & Galt.* [FELTON *the loudest*] Not at all! Not at all!

*Lawson.* [*jocularly, and pointing to the Cards*] *These* are your devotions, then, Siddal—eh?

*Felton.* O! we were only going to play a harmless game for the sake of passing the last hour or so—but we needn't play now—we'll . . . .

*Lawson.* [*moving a little toward the Door*] I see! —I shall interrupt proceedings—so I'm off again.

*Felton.* [*rising and coming toward* LAWSON] No no! what nonsense! Here! sit down with us! [*to* GALT] He sha'n't go,—shall he, Galt?

*Galt.* [*somewhat coldly*] You'd better sit down and make yourself comfortable, Mr. Lawson,—we won't hurt *you* if you won't hurt *us.*

*Lawson.* Well—I can't *play* to-night, at all events —I've got the headache, and . . . .

*Galt.* [*looking, as if idly, round at the Pictures, but with a cunning expression of countenance*] Nor I, either, for the matter o' that—[*taking up a Pipe and filling it*] a pipe and a look on 'll be my share.

*Felton.* Well, put the cards aside—[*to* SIDDAL] eh, Siddal?

*Siddal.* Oh, let's do something!—Here—you and I?

*Felton.* No no, it won't be sociable,—let's have some talk.

*Lawson.* Don't allow me to spoil sport, Felton—I'd rather, as I said before, be off.

*Felton.* O, as for that, my sport would be, obliging Siddal.

*Siddal.* Would it? then fire away, and say no more about it.

*Lawson.* Here! I'll try and take a hand if Galt will.

[*While* FELTON *watches* GALT, *keenly,* GALT, *with another knowing smile, but without raising his eyes from the ground, shakes his head in silence.*

*Felton.* [*seating himself, slowly, and taking up the Cards, and shuffling them, lazily—like one who has not much inclination for a single-handed game—as* SIDDAL *sits down opposite to him*] Umph!—[*yawning*] Heigh-ho!—[*placing the Pack before* SIDDAL] Cut, then.

[*As they go on playing,* LAWSON *lights a Pipe and places himself, with apparent carelessness, behind*

*SIDDAL'S Chair, and GALT seats himself at the end of the Table and watches the Playing and the faces of his companions. At first, the Sums played for are very small—and then they are increased.—Then, the Game proceeds for some time in silence, till SIDDAL, losing, becomes excited, —and then the Stakes are doubled.*

*Galt.* Why, you'd lose your head *to-night*, Siddal!

*Siddal.* [*whose look at GALT is answered by a significant glance*] Umph!

[*They play on—and SIDDAL loses another stake.*

*Siddal.* [*canting a Card, indifferently, on to the Table*] *I*'ve done,—my luck's gone to the d---l.

*Galt.* Quite right—the cards are dead agin ye'.

*Felton.* [*to GALT*] Pshaw! let him have his revenge! let him have his revenge, man!

*Siddal* No no, I've done!

*Felton.* Oh, well!—[*to LAWSON*] Play, Lawson?

*Lawson.* [*taking the Chair which SIDDAL has quitted*] Ay, if you like.

*Galt.* [*coming forward with SIDDAL, and speaking aside to him, as FELTON and LAWSON commence playing*] A 'plant!

*Siddal.* [*looking angry*] You think so?

*Galt.* Yes! Lawson watched your hand (there, keep quiet!), and gave him signs, I fancy!—I thought, too, I saw Felton slip a card, but couldn't swear it!

*Siddal.* [*in a suppressed, but very excited, tone*] The infernal villain! He thought to get his money back and have the stuff and money too!—I am half sorry that we take this trip,—I could have liked [*looking at* GALT *significantly*] to hang about him till ....

*Galt.* Bah! never be impatient!

*Siddal.* Oh! I can bide my time!

*Galt.* We'd better go?

*Siddal.* Yes—come along!

*Allround.* [*entering as* GALT *and* SIDDAL *turn toward the Door to go*] A gentleman in the Bar wants to see you, Mr. Lawson,—he says he won't detain you a minute.

*Lawson.* [*rising*] All right!

*Galt.* [*as* LAWSON *is going to the Door*] We'll say good night, then, Lawson.

*Lawson.* [*as he turns to* GALT *and shakes hands with him in a hasty and indifferent manner*] O! are you off? Good night! [*shaking hands with* SIDDAL] Good night, Siddal!

*Galt,* & *Siddal.* [*with civil indifference*] Good night! [*nodding to* FELTON, *as they are about to follow* LAWSON *out*] Good night!

*Felton.* What's your hurry?

*Galt.* No particular hurry—only a little business to attend to—that's all.

*Felton.* O!—well!—good night!—[*when they have closed the Door after them and he is alone*] I sha'n't see *you* again—to-morrow,—nor the next day,—nor the next,—you're off.—One says "Going to travel"—the other, "True as death,"—and—not another word:—no trumped up story,—not even an answer, civil or sulky, to my curiosity.—[*rubbing his hands cheerfully*] I think they mean it.—How far, I wonder?—I must learn, if possible.—They have more money, too, than that they got from me,—I'd swear it.

*Lawson.* [*opening the Door and lounging back into the Room*] So, that girl's not found, after all.

*Felton.* [*eagerly*] Heathcote's niece?

*Lawson.* Heathcote's niece.

*Felton.* [*staring with a look of satisfaction and as if almost inclined to grin*] The d---l?

*Lawson,* Not found, Bob. One of Bull's men wants to borrow my gig and harness to go somewhere with some one on some business about her:—I must go down to the stable with him.—Will you come?

*Felton.* [*taking his Hat from the Hat-peg and following* LAWSON] Ay.

*Lawson.* [*as they go out*] We can settle afterwards about the winnings.

*Felton.* All right!

*Lawson.* Shy birds, those?

*Felton.* Ha, ha, ha!

[*Then, while solemn, weird and ghostly Music is heard, the Scene is changed to*

SCENE THE THIRD.—*An oldfashioned* APARTMENT *in 'Felton Lodge'—a sort of Batchelor's Room—in almost total Darkness.—At the Back Right Centre there is a Door—at the Back Left Centre another Door, and between them stands an oldfashioned chest of Drawers with a Slanting Top to open and form an Escritoire. Between the Right Upper Entrance and the Right Second Entrance there is a Fireplace. Near the Right Second Entrance stands a large Round Table, a part of which is occupied by a Writing-desk, Writing-materials, etc. Between the Left Upper Entrance and the Left Second Entrance a Square Table. On the Walls hang Spurs, Whips, a Pair of Pistols, a Fowling-piece, a Fox's Brush, and Pictures of Horses, Dogs, etc. There are—an Easy Chair, some occasional Chairs and a Footstool.—The Room has a crowded but snug appearance.*

[FELTON, *opening the Door at the Back Left Centre, enters with his Hat on and a Candle in his hand*

*(lighting up the Room but dimly)—places the Candle and his Hat on the Table—seats himself—leans forward with his elbows on his knees—and, for some time, looks at the floor, thoughtfully.*

*Felton.* [*raising himself and taking from his Pocket the little Parcel of Trinkets, which he places on the Table*] Yes—here—they're safest,—[*rises and walks leisurely to the Back Left Centre Door and bolts it, and comes back slowly and thoughtfully, and reseats himself*] and should they be, by any chance, discovered—why—I accommodated Turf-acquaintances with money for them—and know no more about them,—and—[*very gravely*] since one of these acquaintances is Bertha Blackbourne—er—that is, my dead wife—er—pshaw! Siddal, I should say!—it is as lucky that the Turf-acquaintanceship's a fact as it's unlucky that Siddal's the acquaintance.—Yes yes, they're safest here,—to try to sell them might be to implicate myself in heaven knows what.—Yes—safest here.—[*after turning round and looking at the Drawers and resuming his stooping posture with his elbows on his knees and thinking again*] Dreaming of Bertha Blackbourne?—another's!—let her go! Why, what an ass am I to dream of Bertha Blackbourne, now! [*rousing himself*] But, this won't do—I've something more to attend to before I go to bed. [*going*

*to the chest of Drawers—pulling out the top one and placing it upon the Floor—putting his arm in at the Opening, and seeming to unfasten something at the back, which falls with a loud snap, as of a spring—coming to the Table with a small Cabinet —taking the Trinkets from the Parcel, and packing them carefully in the Cabinet which he carries back to its place of concealment behind the Drawer and the little, secret Spring-flap—and then—lifting the Drawer from the Floor and replacing it and returning to the Table—taking up the Candle—glancing round the Room—and walking to the Door at the Back Left Centre*] So,—[*as he slips back the Bolt, and goes out*] nothing here that I shall want to-night, I think.

*Polly.* [*in a low, but quick, merry, saucy tone, as she enters, cautiously, with a Candle, at the Back Right Centre Door, almost as soon as* FELTON *has left the Room in Darkness*] Not my first visit here without *your* leave, Bob Felton. You know *this* door's been locked for many a day, and perhaps you fancy that you've got the key, hid, somewhere?—Well, then, you haven't! and—oh! couldn't I surprise you!—I have.—But, what the nose don't smell the eyes don't water at—and, so, it's all right, and no harm done!—Besides—I can't help it—Harry Stukely *must* have my letter,—and how's it to get all the way to Wailingdale

without sealingwax?—I must have some sealingwax to-night, if I die for it.—[*sighing, as she rummages in the Desk*] O dear! to think he should be all the way down in Leicestershire! [*impatiently, as she searches unsuccessfully*] Why, that fool of a Felton's got none!—[*sighing again, as she casts her eyes round the Room*] Heigh-ho!—[*seeming to recollect something, and tripping toward the Drawers*] I know! [*pulling out the top Drawer, and starting back as the loud snap, through the falling of the Spring-flap (insecurely fastened by* FELTON*), is heard again*] Good gracious! what's that? why, I've broke the drawer!—[*putting her hand in, and feeling round*] No, haven't—it's all right!—[*after looking a moment* I *among the Drawer's contents*] Here's a bit,—that's lucky. [*putting a piece of Sealingwax into her Pocket, and trying to push the Drawer in again, but prevented by the Spring-flap which she does not understand*] Bother the drawer! why—it won't go in! [*after considering a moment*] It's my belief, there's something in the way, at the back.—[*looking—after pulling out the Drawer and placing it on the floor—in, at the opening*] Lor! what's that? [*reaching out the Little Cabinet, which the falling of the Spring-flap (the noise heard) has left exposed to view, and laughing quietly as she brings it to the Table*] Well, I never! [*opening the Cabinet*] Oh! crikey! [*looking*

*round, half frightened*] I'd better put 'em away again, though, and look at 'em another time. [*taking from them a Ring (the Ring which* SIDDAL *showed to* GALT *on the borders of Stebbington Forest, and which* SIDDAL *and* GALT *sold, with other things, to* FELTON *in the Old-fashioned, Wainscoted Apartment of "The Plough" Inn) and examining it carefully*] Oh! what a beautiful ring! and what a curiosity it is! two little creatures a-laughing at each other through a tiny looking-glass that's made out of a diamond! Oh, how it sparkles! and .... [*looking into the Cabinet*] Good heart alive! Well!.... [*starting round, as though she heard something*] But it's o' no use—I'm too nervous now! [*running to the Drawers again with the Cabinet and putting it back into its place and then lifting the top Drawer from the Floor and trying to push it in and finding the former impediment*] Oh! good heavens! what shall I do? I can't get the Drawer in!—[*pulling out the Drawer again, and looking into the Opening*] Ah! I see!—why, there's a long piece of wood right across the back! [*starting back at another loud snap caused by something which she does in putting her arm in*] Oh!!—[*peeping in again*] why, it's gone up with a bang!—[*looking at the Drawers for a moment or two*] I wonder whether I could open that thing again?—[*after trying a little*] No, I'm bothered if I can! Well! that's a nice how d'ye' do!—Oh, dear, dear,

dear! I sha'n't be able to open it *to-morrow!*—[*after thinking a little*] My goodness! and supposing Squire Felton should n't be able to open it! there'll be a pretty kettle o' fish!—[*putting the Drawer in again*] Well —never mind!—I did n't do it; and so it's no matter. —There—the drawer goes in capitally. [*starting at footsteps without*] Ah? Felton a-com . . . .?

[*She seizes her Candle—rushes to the Door at the Back Right Centre—blows her Candle out as she opens it—shuts it after her—and, on the outside, locks it, in her haste, with a noise which is only partially drowned in another caused by* FELTON *re-entering suddenly by the Door at the Back Left Centre. The Right Centre Door is shut and the Left Centre one opened almost at the same instant, and* FELTON *strides to the middle of the Room holding his Candle over his head, peering round earnestly, and wondering whether he really heard a noise, as—the Curtain falls again.*

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A LAPSE OF

## TWO YEARS

IS SUPPOSED

---

*And then the Curtain rises upon*

## ACT THE THIRD.

SCENE THE FIRST.—*The still Interior of a* FOREST *—as before, at Stebbington.—Shade—with soft Sunlight breaking through in little leaf-like patches everywhere. —A Felled Tree lying, huge, across a portion of the open space.*

[SQUIRE HEATHCOTE, *dressed in Mourning, and looking very dejected and many years older than when last seen, enters, slowly.*

*Heathcote.* [*speaking as he enters*] But—am I reckoning rightly?—surely, it is more?—[*after considering*] No—not so much—not so much—scarcely two years.—[*considering again*] Two years—two years,—[*sighs*] oh, Silvia! Silvia! how strangely long has seemed the agony of two short years to your poor erring uncle!—[*starting*] 'Dead?'—[*pausing and weeping*] Pardon! oh! pardon, thou offended God! [*as gipsy-visaged* HUGH *is seen watching him from among the Trees*] 'twas *I* that did it! [*as* HUGH *seems horror-struck and withdraws hastily*] And still—[*sauntering to the Felled Tree—seating himself upon it—and*

*continuing with mournful tenderness*] I loved you, Silvia, with a love as tender as parent ever cherished for his own—a love I knew *of*, yet scarce knew!—Oh! until that last—that fateful year....! Why, I'd forgot, almost, that you were not my daughter and George's sister!—Alas! poor George! we've brought upon him, now, a heavy, heavy grief to balance 'gainst bright joys your frolicsome and sisterly affection once around his childhood called!—Alas! poor George! poor George!—[*pointing to himself, and staring into vacancy, as if startled by a sudden recollection*] And *I*?—to be, henceforth, the pointed-out, avoided wretch whom men but dare not *call* 'poor Silvia's murderer!' [*putting his hand to his forehead*] Is it an ugly dream? or—am I mad?—[*lets his head droop upon his bosom for a moment—then covers his face with his handkerchief, and weeps bitterly,—and, then, raising himself a little, moves partly round, and, with his face turned half away, falls upon his knees*] Oh, Thou to whom the earth-deserted turn with trembling hope that thou'lt forgive forgetfulness of Thee—save me from madness! My reason reels, as drunken with the cup of woe,—support me, God! Oh, let not chastisement so dread be needful—make me wise!—I have no ground on which to plead for mercy, save this—that Thou art good, and Christ has died!—[*passionately, after a long pause during which he has seemed to be praying*]

Thou wilt not leave me crushed, vile though I am?—no? —no? Thou'lt not forsake me quite? I've trusted Thee ere this—have trusted when my well-nigh-overwhelming trouble was the fruit direct of my great guiltiness and found Thee merciful!—I trust again!—[*sobbing for some time convulsively—then remaining silent—then, rising and standing, some moments, with his face covered,—and, then—drying his tears, and speaking in a more hopeful tone*] Yes, I will hope—hope Heaven will bar bleared man from branding my brave boy 'a Murderer's progeny.'—Ah! but for him I think that I could die and leave the world most gladly!—[*looking round as 'twere upon the silence—listening —and smiling pensively*] How strange it seems—this contrast between Nature's peacefulness and human passion!—[*as cheerful Music in the distance is faintly heard*] But—hark! .... Well well! man's (doubtless wisely) made to joy amid the miseries of his fellows! The revellers fiddle and the dying pray in hearing of each other!—[*glancing around him again*] As for myself—even my prostrate self—these warbling birds, and dancing trees shaking their golden flakes of sunlight round me to low breeze-music, respond, I fain would fancy, to my hopes, by their soft cheerfulness.—[*sighing (as the Music in the distance is heard a little more distinctly) and walking, very slowly, toward the Right Second Entrance*] Poor George!—I should,

for his sake, be seen sometimes at the village gatherings, Margery says:—[*sighing again, as he goes, wearily, away by the Right Second Entrance*] I'd rather be alone:—but—if 'tis best....

[*A change, as the Music becomes louder, to*

SCENE THE SECOND.—*The Back of* "THE FOWLER'S FORTUNE" ALEHOUSE, *on the Border of Stebbington Forest.—The Scene, on the Left, from the back to the Left Second Entrance, consists of a portion of the Back of the House.—The Corner of the lower portion of the House, at the Left Second Entrance, is hidden by Trees. From the Back Left Corner to the Back Right Centre, another portion of the back of the House.—At the Back Right Centre a somewhat distant View, in which are seen The Village-Church and "Heathcote Manorhouse."—The Roof of the Alehouse is thatched and has projecting Eaves. The Roof of the portion on the Left is overhung by the branches of large Trees and the Roof of the portion at the Back is clear—so that the Thatch and Chimney are seen.—On the Wall (facing us—high up) an oldfashioned Earthenware Bottle (for birds to build in) and (lower down—beside a Latticed Window) a Magpie's Cage are hanging. There are, also, a Latticed Window on the Left and, in the corner at the angle of the Walls, four or five Wooden Steps leading up to a Door.—Two long Benches, at right angles, occupy the Walls of the Building (under the Latticed Windows), and before each Bench there is a long narrow Table.*

*The whole of the Right-hand side of the Scene is occupied by huge Forest-trees.*

[*As the Curtain rises*—ROSE, LUCY, PHEBE, NELL, JESSIE, JENNIT, LAURA, JULIA, SUKEY, BETTY, NANCY, CARY, DICK, BEN, KATE, MEG, ALICK, *and other Villagers are discovered, already dancing to the Air of "The Young May Moon" played by* ANDREW *and his two brother Fiddlers, who are 'perched' on one of the Tables; and seated on the Benches are—the Landlord* (HUMPHRY DELLBROOK) *in Shooting-Coat and Gaiters and looking like a Gamekeeper with a white Apron on, and two or three Countrymen—while* DAME DELLBROOK *bustles up and down the Steps, bringing, now, brown Mugs of Ale—then, Tobacco-pipes—and so on,—and, almost immediately,* HEATHCOTE *enters, slowly, by the Left Second Entrance, and bows kindly to all, as* JULIA, CARY, *and* LAURA *shamefacedly fall behind, with their Partners, out of his sight, and cease dancing.*

*Heathcote.* [*turning and seeing* HUMPHRY *who is seated at the Table on the Left*] Ah! Humphry!—I am too late almost, I see, to wish you merry times!

*Dellbrook.* [*rising, and bowing respectfully*] No, Squire, no—good wishes never come too late,—the same to you.

*Heathcote.* You are quite well?

*Dellbrook.* [*smiling, and bowing affirmatively*] Thank you, Squire.

*Heathcote.* And Dame Dellbrook?

*Dellbrook.* [*indicating with his hand* DAME DELLBROOK, *as she appears at the Door, about to descend the Steps, with another Jug of Ale in her hand*] Quite well, thank you.

*Heathcote.* [*nodding kindly to* DAME DELLBROOK *as she descends the Steps*] I'm glad to hear you are well and see you are merry, Dame.

*Dame Dellbrook.* Yes, merry, Squire, in the way of humble folk,—are you enjoying good health, may I ask?

*Heathcote.* Well, middling, Dame—middling, thank you.

*Dame Dellbrook.* And Master George?

*Heathcote.* [*smiling, and trying to speak cheerfully*] Why—middling, too, I thank you.

*Dellbrook.* Bring the Squire a chair, Dame—he'll . . . .

*Heathcote.* [*perceiving that the Dancers have, from the moment of his appearance, one after another, left off dancing, and that the Music has now ceased, and therefore interrupting* DELLBROOK *as* DAME DELLBROOK *hurries up the Steps for a Chair*] No no, don't trouble about me, I beg! I have already been out longer than I intended, and now must hasten home—with some regret, believe me, that circumstances won't permit me to enjoy this cheerful company. [*smiling kindly*

*upon* DAME DELLBROOK, *who has returned, almost in a moment, with a Chair*] Thanks, Dame, for your respect—the bench had done as well, if I'd had time to stay:—another day, if heaven will grant me so much happiness, [*turning to the Dancers*] we'll laugh and talk and dance an afternoon away together. [*offering* DAME DELLBROOK *his hand, which she takes seriously but respectfully*] Good-bye!—[*giving his hand to* DELLBROOK] and, good-bye, Dellbrook!—[*looking at the Countrymen who are seated at the Benches, and then at the Dancers, and lifting his Hat, and bowing*] Friends—all—farewell!

[*As* HEATHCOTE *walks slowly away, the Dancers huddle together around the Tables, and bow and curtsey, coldly, as he passes and disappears at the Back Right Centre.*

*Dame Dellbrook.* [*when* HEATHCOTE *has gone*] Well, if that isn't a-coming and going like a ghost I don't know what is!—[*to* KATE] What the plague did ye' leave off dancing for, Kate?

*Kate.* Why—I couldn't help it:—besides, didn't Julia, Cary, and Laura, directly he . . . .

*Dellbrook.* [*interrupting her*] There, don't let's talk about it,—[*to* ANDREW] off we go again, Andrew!

*Ben.* A song! a song! let's have a song, for a change!

*Hugh.* A song! a song! a song!

*Dick.* Hear, hear! a song!

*Ben.* A song! give us a song, Dellbrook!

*Nancy.* Yes yes! sing us a song, Gaffer Dellbrook!

*Dellbrook.* No no, you can dance better than I can sing any day, and just now I'm out of tune.

*Sukey.* Oh, sing for us, Dellbrook—do!

*Hugh.* A song! a song!

*Sukey.* Make him sing for us, Dame.

*Dame Dellbrook.* There! you may as well sing for them, Humphry,—they'll have another dance afterwards. Sing the words that Parson Pomfret wrote for the music that Bertha Blackbourne made up all out of her own head—bless her!

*Dellbrook.* But I don't know the tune.

*Dame Dellbrook.* Never mind! sing 'em to the tune I heard ye' singin' 'em to this morning—can't ye? I'm sure they go very well to that!

*Dellbrook.* All right! [*singing—as they all become silent—to the Music, as it recommences with "Sally In Our Alley."*]

'Mid dance and song to own the truth—
As Age comes smiling toward us—
That Time hath reft us of our youth,
May Heaven the heart accord us!
We'll then where sport nerves still resort
And bar or banish Sorrow,
Defying Care, her crony pale,
To plague us till—the morrow!

And when our step hath lost its spring,
And we—for romps the wrong ones—
Can only sit without the ring
And praise the feats of strong ones,
May Heaven, befriending still our end,
Enable us to borrow
From mem'ries of Life's cheerful past
Its hope of *its*—TO-MORROW.

*All.* [*as the Music goes off into "The Young May Moon" again and the Dance recommences*] Bravo, Dellbrook! Thank'e! Thank'e! Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!

[*The Dance proceeds for some time,—and then clumsy footsteps are heard.*

*Then* CLOD *enters, running, with a ridiculous yell—and the frightened, shrieking Dancers start, some to one side and some to the other, as, between them, huddled in a heap as it were, and with his face to the ground—he falls.*

*Profound silence ensues.*

*Dick.* [*stooping and looking at him*] Hullo! [*turning to the others*] why, it's Clod!

*Ben.* [*stooping*] No!

*Nell.* [*bending forward toward* CLOD *and recognizing him, but not going near him*] As true as ....

*Jessie.* [*in the same manner*] Yes ....

*Jennit.* It's he ....

*Nancy.* And no mistake!

*Julia.* Well, well!

*Dame Dellbrook.* [*bustling up to* CLOD] Why, what on earth's the matter?

*Dellbrook.* [*approaching him at the same time*] Here,—[*to some of the others who lay hold of* CLOD] that's it—lift him up—he's hurt.

*Sukey.* [*hanging lovingly on the arm of* HUGH,] O, bother him! not he!—he's always coming frightening people when they're enjoying their-selves.

*Clod.* [*trembling ridiculously when the crowd has lifted him on to his feet and is staring at him*] O...ooh dea...r!

*Dellbrook.* What's the matter.

*Dame Dellbrook.* [*vehemently*] Yes—what's the matter?

*Cary.* What is it, Clod?

*Laura.* Who's frightened ye'?

*Betty.* [*as they all jostle each other around him*] What's happened? tell us, can't ye'?

*Clod.* [*foolishly rolling his eyes round upon them, and groaning, and speaking as in terror*] O...oo...ooh! oo... oo... ooh! I've bin and gone and seen him! O...oo...ooh!

*Dellbrook.* [*shaking him gently, and speaking rather sharply*] 'Seen him!'—seen who?

*Clod.* O...oo...ooh! Squi...i...r'! Heath... *cote*! Squi...i....!

*Dame Dellbrook.* [*shaking him angrily*] 'Heathcote?' well, stupid! so have we, and what of that?

*Clod.* O...ooh, yes! but—er, Dame—I mean Mum—er—Mistress Dellbrook—I've been and—er—*met him in the lane*!!! and ....

*Hugh.* Well, coward! we suppose you have! why, he was here just now! and what of that too? are ye' a-frightened of a man, then?

*Clod.* [*for a moment startled by the taunt of cowardice from his terror—panting, and lowering his voice—with a menacing look and movement toward* HUGH, *who prepares for an encounter*] Eh?

*Dellbrook.* [*stepping in between them*] Peace! peace, Hugh! Let's have none o' that! Come! hands off, both of ye'!—Clod is, as Parson Pomfret says, perhaps, less

a coward—among men—apart from guilt—[*jocularly*] and ghosts—than most of us, and I'll not have him—here, at all events—insulted! [*to* CLOD—*when he and* HUGH *seem calm again—soothingly and encouragingly*] What of the Squire, Clod? Why would you avoid him?

[*A long pause, during which all stare at* CLOD *excitedly.*

*Then,* CLOD *seems recalled to a remembrance of the occasion of his terror—and, then, he, slowly—quietly—relapses into his former state of droll, bewildered apprehension.*

*Dellbrook.* What of the Squire, Clod? Why would you avoid him?

*Clod.* [*tragically rolling his eyes around him—and speaking in a sepulchral tone*] C...lo...thes!

*Dame Dellbrook.* [*with intense curiosity*] 'Clothes?'

*Clod.* [*nodding, and then looking at them during another pause,—and, then, again speaking slowly and tragically*] M...ur...der!

[*Shrieks, exclamations of "Heaven preserve us!" "Ah?" "Merciful Powers!" "What murder?" "Where?" "Whereabouts?" "Who's murdered?"*

*"When?" "When?" etc., and great confusion, as* DELLBROOK *fetches a Drinking-horn from one of the Tables and hands it to* CLOD, *who 'tosses off' its contents in a moment.*

*Dellbrook.* Silence! silence, friends! if we would learn the news we must be quiet!

*Ben.* Silence!

*Dick.* Silence!

*Hugh.* Silence! Silence!

*Dame Dellbrook.* [*half frightened and half angry, and looking intently at* CLOD] I suppose, booby! it's the old story about Silvia Heathcote, eh?

*Clod.* [*nodding, and looking, though a little more collected, comically grave*] Another.

*Dame Dellbrook.* 'Another?'

*Dellbrook.* Get him a sup more ale, wife—it's something fresh that's happened, I know,—[*to* CLOD *encouragingly*] isn't it, Clod?

*Clod.* [*his eyes wandering round after* DAME DELLBROOK *as she fetches Ale from one of the Tables*] Yes:—[*sighing*] I'll tell ye'—presently.

*Dame Dellbrook.* [*giving him the Jug*] Here—drink it up, and 'a' done with it.

[CLOD *slowly drinks off the contents of the Jug and then quietly peers in at the bottom of it, and they all smile.*

*Dellbrook.* More, Wife!

[*One of the Villagers hands another Jug to* DAME DELLBROOK *who hands it to* CLOD,—*and, half serious and half amused, they all stand watching him while he 'empties' it.*

*Dellbrook.* [*to* CLOD, *as the latter stands rubbing his stomach*] Well?

*Clod.* [*nodding gravely*] Better.

*Dellbrook.* Glad of it.—Now then—what about these clothes?

*Clod.* [*still gravely, but with some little pride in his own importance beginning to appear*] Ye' know—er—the corner o' the meadow—on Squire Heathcote's grounds?—[*as* DELLBROOK *seems to consider*] the corner as comes up to the road like—a little above Felton's fi'bar' gate?

*Dellbrook.* What, where they're going to put up the new cow-sheds?

*Clod.* [*nodding*] That's it.

*Dellbrook.* Yes? well?

*Clod.* Well—er .... Er ....

*Dellbrook.* Come!—get on, get on!

*Clod.* Er—they was a-diggin' holes for posts—or something—and—[*looking round, ridiculously nervous, at them all, and lowering his voice*] I'm frightened.

*Dellbrook.* [*to* DAME DELLBROOK] Another jug, Wife!

[DAME DELLBROOK *fetches another Jug of Ale which* CLOD *luxuriates over in the same slow manner as before—the Villagers the while regarding him with anxious impatience.*

*Dame Dellbrook.* Now then, out with it like a man, Clod!

*Clod.* They found a hat ....

*Dame Dellbrook,* A man's?

*Clod.* [*shaking his head solemnly*]—A woman's.

*Rose.* Goodness! gracious!

*Lucy.* Well, I never!

*Phebe.* Lor!

*Dellbrook.* [*impatiently*] Yes? yes?—and then?

*Clod.* [*again with slow solemnity*] And then—they found—a shawl.

*Dellbrook.* Yes? well?—get on! what then?

*Clod.* That—was a woman's, too.

*Rose.* Goodness! gracious!

*Lucy.* Well, I never!

*Phebe.* Lor!

*Dame Dellbrook.* [*sneeringly*] Umph!—a woman's, was it?—well, Lively! and what then?

*Clod.* And then—they found—a something that a woman wears—er—underneath her—shawl.

*Several Voices.* A gown! a gown! a gown!

*Clod.* [*still shaking his head solemnly*] No—underneath her gown.

*Dame Dellbrook.* Well? well?—what was it? you know, it seems?—a pair o' stays, I s'pose?—[*to the Girls, who, pretending to be ashamed, give a little shriek and hide their faces with their hands*] Be quiet, Gals—and don't make fools o' yourselves!—let's hear what he's got to say!

*Clod.* No:—underneath—her stays.

*Dame Dellbrook.* [*very impatiently*] Ah! well?—yes?—well?

*Dellbrook.* Don't worry, Wife!—*he*'ll tell us!—What was it, Clod?

*Clod.* Well—er . . . . ! I, er—I don't like to say.

*Laura.* [*to* BETTY] Oh! Crymunny! how curious!

*Betty.* Yes, quite mysterious!—isn't it nice?

*Dellbrook.* [*holding up his finger to* CLOD] Mind! —no more ale, Clod, till you've told!

*Clod.* Well, er—it wasn't, er—a shirt—it was a . . . .

*Rose.* Goodness! gracious!

*Lucy.* Well, I never!

*Phebe.* Lor!

*Clod.* [*looking round upon them sneeringly*] No it wasn't, now!—it wasn't a goodness-gracious-well-I-never-lor neither! *that*'s not the name it's knowed by, and—I'll tell ye' what it is—if you wanted a article o' the sort, and was to go to the shop and ask for a goodness-gracious-well-I-never-lor, they'd tell ye' they didn't sell it—come, now . . . . ! [*as if a bright thought had struck him*] Here—I'll tell ye' what I'll do—I'll tell [*pointing to* DAME DELLBROOK] her, and she can tell [*pointing to* DELLBROOK] him, and he can tell the ladies,—er . . . . No no! I don't mean *that* . . . . ! Er—I'll tell [*pointing to* DELLBROOK] *him*, and *he* can tell [*pointing to* DAME DELLBROOK] her, and *she* can tell the ladies. Yes, that's it—and . . . .

*Dame Dellbrook.* [*interrupting him*] O, never mind, Clod! never mind! we know what it was! —what else?

*Clod.* [*after, in silence, looking alternately and mysteriously from one to another till all their heads are gathered close together round him in painful expectation—again in a sepulchral tone*]—B...o...ne...s!

[*Shrieks, exclamations and confusion again.*

DELLBROOK *and two or three of the men stand, for a few seconds, staring, gravely, at* CLOD,—*and then—they all regather eagerly around him.*

*Dellbrook.* [*seriously*] Bones, Clod!—human bones! What of them?—tell us about them, that's a good fellow—come!

*Clod.* Some o' the bones—o' some young 'oman—nineteen years of age.

*Dame Dellbrook.* [*startled*] Ah?

*Dellbrook.* Who says so?

*Clod.* Doct...or Pen...dle...bury.

*Dellbrook.* [*thoughtfully, as to himself*] Does he?—[*to* CLOD] What else, Clod?—you've heard something else?

*Clod.* [*slowly shaking his head again*] No.

*Dellbrook.* Nothing!—But—something about murder—what was that?

*Clod.* Why—*that* was it.

*Dellbrook.* [*kindly*] Yes—but, you see, Clod, we don't quite understand you,—who has been murdered?

*Clod.* Why—didn't I tell ye'?

*Dellbrook.* No.

*Clod.* What! not about the clothes—Silvia Heathcote's clothes?

*Dellbrook.* [*as he and the others stare, awe-stricken*] 'Silvia Heathcote's' clothes!—you didn't tell us that the clothes were Silvia Heathcote's!

*Clod.* Didn't I?

*Dellbrook.* No.

*Clod.* [*considering a moment*] O, no—nor more I did'nt!—I forgot!

*Dellbrook.* And who's suspected?—you know what I mean, Clod?

*Clod.* O' doin' it?—why—[*in a terrified whisper*] who have they suspected all along?—[*indicating with his thumb the Back Right Centre, by which* HEATHCOTE *has so recently left them, but without daring to turn round and look at it*] him as I met i' the lane there, and was so frightened I could hardly get by him! Oh, lor! oh, lor! I couldn't pass him without touching my hat to him! and I thought he was a-going to ask me

what business I had down here! an' he looked as if he knew what I was a-comin' to tell about! and . . . . !

*Voices from the Crowd.* [*exclaiming almost together, in quiet tones rather of censure than surprise*] Heathcote! Heathcote! Heathcote! Heathcote! Heathcote!

*Clod.* [*in a loud, deep, rough voice, and walking about, as though in terror*] He see me a-comin'! I won't go home to-night! I'll never sleep on the premises again! I'll . . . . !

[*A sudden pause.—Dead silence.—Footsteps heard approaching by the Right Second Entrance—toward which, fixedly, all their eyes are turned.—Then, in a dignified and quiet (not slow) manner, enters* —PARSON POMFRET, *in Knee-breeches and a Clerical Hat, and dressed with gentlemanly care.*

*Pomfret.* [*bowing to the startled Villagers who respectfully make way for him as he approaches* CLOD *and takes his hand and smiles upon him jocundly and kindly*] What *will* you do, friend Caleb?—Why, my good fellow! you *will* go home—and keep quite quiet,—at least, I trust you will since *I* request it.—I think I've heard you say the Heathcotes have well-used you?

*Clod.* [*very meekly*] Yes, Sir.

*Pomfret.* Well, then, you'll go home at once—and do your duties well, in this their time of overwhelming trouble, if such it is to be—of course, you will! And, mark me! as sure as your name's Caleb Clod—as Squire Heathcote's servant you'll be the better thought of here, among your friends, if, just now, your words are fitly spoken. The Squire's not accused as yet, and may not be accused at all for aught we know,—[*significantly*] so—the least said, you know—the soonest mended.—Besides—supposing him accused—we're not to be his judges.—Of course, to-night, in Stebbington, the talk will be of this and nothing else, and it was natural for you to bring the news here,—so far there is no harm done;—but—after this—[*smiling*] you'll hear, see, and say nothing, and keep upon the premises as much as possible—for some few days at least—thinking that's what you'd better do—eh, Caleb?

*Clod.* [*scratching his head, with some hesitation and reluctance in his manner*] E...yes, Sir.

*Pomfret.* Give me your hand again—you're a wise man, Caleb. [*to the others*] This news has marred your music, I suppose, friends?

*Dellbrook.* [*speaking for the rest*] Well, yes, it has,—er.... [*getting a little nearer to* POMFRET, *and speaking in a lower tone, as* CLOD *and the Villagers are seen whispering excitedly and stealing off*

*quickly, in twos and threes, by various Entrances, until they are all gone*] Clod's news, Sir, is correct then?

*Pomfret.* I daresay what he told you's true in substance. I saw the honest fellow leave the meadow, and guessed he'd come down here, and, to tell truth, came round myself meaning to meet him, if I could, and stop his tongue: George Heathcote likes him, and, unless he's quiet, he may lose a friend. Besides, I think there's too much prejudice already, among the people, against Heathcote. At first I meant to talk to Clod alone, but, afterwards, as you've seen, finding him here, I wouldn't lose the chance to make a little speech to him before the others, however ill-timed, droll, or awkward it might seem. They've got the hint that they've no *right*, as yet, to call the Squire—er—anything but 'gentleman.'

*Dellbrook.* You don't think, then, there's any thing at all in all this—er . . . .

*Pomfret.* O, I don't say *so*!—I only say the prejudice has been *too* strong against him,—so strong that 't has but tended to unfit us for a calm inquiry for the truth. —For instance, now—you are aware, I fancy, that it has been a settled point with some folk that he—did this thing?—in plain words—killed his niece?

*Dellbrook.* Yes.

*Pomfret.* And yet, till now, they've had no grounds —no grounds we could call good—for thinking of her *as*—er—dead.

*Dellbrook.* Umph!

*Pomfret.* We differ, perhaps?—you doubt that?

*Dellbrook.* His *threatening* her so fiercely at the Manorhouse? and, afterwards, his lone self-accusation in the forest?—both overheard, 'tis said, too surely?

*Pomfret.* Mere words, it may be—spoken in passion, or the stress of sorrow, and meaning nothing.

*Dellbrook.* These clothes?

*Pomfret.* Yes—*now*, I grant, there's cause for some suspicion;—I'm only arguing that, *till* now they'd little cause and yet condemned him.

*Dellbrook.* You think, then, that these clothes are proof that she is—er—dead?

*Pomfret.* [*shaking his head, after considering awhile*] No:—hardly. The human bones found with them are, I *think*, the bones of some one older than nineteen,—and, then, I think the clothes can't easily be identified—I've seen them. Besides, this girl, who seems so sure the hat and shawl were Silvia Heathcote's, can know but little of Miss Heathcote or the clothes she wore, and, questioned in a Court of Justice, might talk less confidently. She had lived two days

only with the Heathcotes, I am told, when Silvia was missed. Again, with the exception of old Margery, there is not now a servant at the Manorhouse who lived there then:—the servants leave as soon as they become acquainted with the suspicions against Heathcote.—[*seeing* DAME DELLBROOK, *with a Broom in her hands, sweeping, just inside the House-door*] I've a commission, by the bye, I now remember, for your good lady.

*Dellbrook.* [*as they walk toward the House-door*] But, don't you think it strange, Sir, that he should threaten her—she be missed—and he suspected—and that, then, this discovery should be made?

*Pomfret.* [*as they ascend the Door-steps while the Music, in the distance, of "Though Sweet the Hour" is heard faintly*] I shall not, I believe, be able to convert you, Dellbrook, to my opinion, and, as next Monday, or, say Tuesday, will bring with it, doubtless, the discovery of such serious facts in reference to this matter, it's hardly worth while now, perhaps, to dispute of probabilities.

[*They reach the Threshold—and then, as he* (POMFRET) *and* DELLBROOK *disappear by entering the Inn, the Music changes to "The Morning Hymn," the first few bars of which accompany the Change to*

SCENE THE THIRD.—*A* WOOD.—*On each side of the Scene, Trees.—In the Back-ground the upper part*

*of Stebbington Church (which apparently stands in a hollow) appearing, at a short distance, above a mass of rich, dark foliage.—A Church-bell is ringing the people to Sunday-morning Service.—A venerable Countryman of the humble class and his Wife and Grandchild (all in Deep Mourning) totter slowly across the Scene from the Right Second Entrance and disappear at the Left Upper Entrance.—Then, three cheerful-looking smart young Village-girls follow, but more quickly—one of them stepping on one side to pluck a wild-flower at the foot of a Tree and then tripping after her companions who have disappeared.—Then (the route of every one being across the Scene from the Right Second Entrance and away by the Left Upper Entrance) a staid-looking Farm-labourer, and his two boys hand-in-hand.—Then,* DOCTOR PENDLEBURY *and his Wife.—Then, two pairs of Lovers, walking slowly, and whispering—the second pair appearing just before the first pair disappears.—Then, Five Little Children—the two tallest walking in front—the three behind ones abreast, and all hand-in-hand.—Then, a Young Gentleman with an elegantly-dressed Young Lady on his arm.—Then* DELLBROOK *and* DAME DELLBROOK *(with a Countryman in a clean Smock-frock walking beside them) who disappear just after the appearance of a Group (of Four Mechanics) which follows them rather closely.—Then,* CLOD, *respectably dressed in his Sunday clothes, with his hands in his pockets and looking sad.—Then,* BLACKBOURNE *and* LADY BLACKBOURNE*:—and then, a rather awkward and poor, but tidy-looking, Servant-girl (like the others with her Prayer-book and Hymn-book in her hand) hurrying along as if she were late.*

[*All seem, more or less, cheerful and chatty except* BLACKBOURNE, LADY BLACKBOURNE, CLOD *and the Servant-girl; and the Bell continues ringing till the Scene has changed to*

SCENE THE FOURTH.—*The* SIDE OF THE FRONT OF STEBBINGTON CHURCH.—*At the far end of the Scene, in the extreme distance, at the Left Centre, are—the Front Entrance (which faces the Right-hand) and the Side Entrance (which faces us) of the Church-porch.—On each side of the Scene, Overhanging Trees all the way up form a Dark Avenue which ends at the Porch, whose Front Entrance is open to the Sunlight from the Right.*

[*As Villagers and others pass from the Right, through the Light in the distance, into the Church by the Front Entrance, the Groups observed in the last Scene, on their way to Worship, appear one after another at the Right Second Entrance and walk up the Avenue into the Church by the Porch's Side Entrance in the same order —except that the pairs of Lovers (who have loitered) and the venerable Countryman and his Wife and Grandchild, in Mourning (who seem tired) follow, in this Scene, last.*

*Before the last Group has quite entered the Church the Bell ceases to ring, and an Organ-Voluntary commences—and dies away as the Scene changes to*

SCENE THE FIFTH.—*The* ANTECHAMBER *in "Heathcote Manorhouse" again.—A Bell-rope at the Back Left Centre. A Sofa at the Back Centre.—The Doors at the Back Right Centre and Right Upper Entrances concealed by the Screen.*

[MARGERY, *a portly and respectable-looking Housekeeper, dressed in Black, and considerably advanced*

*in years, is discovered standing by the diamond-paned Casement and gazing out silently,—and, then,* MARA, *a young Servant-maid, enters, almost close beside her, by the Door at the Left Upper Entrance.*

*Margery.* Come here, Mara!—quick! quick, my girl! [*laying her hand upon* MARA'S *shoulder, as the girl joins her, and directing her attention, through the Window, to some one in the distance*] Is that the Squire?

*Mara.* What, leaning on the bridge-wall-coping, yonder?—lor, no!—some stranger.

*Margery.* I really thought 't was Mr. Heathcote—although I knew he *meant* to go to Church this morning. —My eyes are getting dim, now, Mara.

*Mara.* And well they may if you continue crying so;—why, you've been crying since I left you—crying *again*!

*Margery.* [*walking to the Table and pensively seating herself with her elbow on it and her cheek upon her hand*] You never cry, I fancy, Mara—do you?

*Mara.* [*in a quiet tone but gazing at her in surprise*] Lor, no!—at least not often,—why should I?

*Margery.* I know not why you should:—your mother cried your share, perhaps, with her own.

*Mara.* My 'mother,' Margery!—well, that's a good one! you've known me—let me see!—not quite four days, and what you know of her you've heard from me, and what I know of her is next to nothing, and yet—why, you speak of her as if you'd known her—and known her to be a 'cry-baby'!

*Margery.* Was she not sorrowful?—but I forget—you never heard, perhaps?

*Mara.* I don't remember her, you know?

*Margery.* No.—Your father—he was shot, I think you said, in some great battle?

*Mara.* Yes.

*Margery.* A little while ere you were born? [*as* MARA *nods affirmatively*] So, your poor mother called you Mara.—Your father left you cheerfulness—your mother—a sad name.

*Mara.* 'Sad?'—*is* it a sad name?

*Margery.* [*smiling sorrowfully*] Don't you remember the old Bible-story about the Jewish woman who came back to Judah childless and widowed, and implored her kinsfolk to call her—not Naomi, but Mara?

*Mara.* Ah, of course, I do! but then—I never thought of that! [*placing a Chair by the side of* MARGERY *and seating herself*] What makes you say I'm cheerful?

*Margery.* You are a thorough soldier's daughter, though your name is Mara.

*Mara.* And you're half angry with me for it?

*Margery.* No—not I! I'd rather see folk glad than grievous although I've not been very glad myself of late,—and, by the bye, this explanation that I've promised you is rather grievous too.

*Mara.* Well, now, dear Margery!—before beginning —you don't think I have been impertinent about that matter?

*Margery.* No, not at all; your conduct was consistent —your questions having reference direct to your desire to render always, everywhere, respectful, honest service. You found, child, when you came, that there were rumours of the House, or of its Master, that were strange, and that it might not be quite pleasant to stay with us,—in short—you thought you must at once decide upon retreating—or—*settling* here;—and, so, you came to me and told me what you'd heard, and—got my promise that, if you'd stay till Sunday, I'd give you all the explanation you could have, and, what was of more import, plain, honest counsel as to what it would be best for you to do.—You did, as I have said, quite right, and I must keep my word.—[*taking a Letter from her Pocket*] I have been writing to a friend, and, perhaps, I'd better read to you that portion of my

letter which contains the explanation of these rumours which she, as well as you, has asked me for. [*finding in the Letter the part referred to*] Ah, *here* it is! —[*reading*]

"This lady, Silvia Heathcote, is, or was, the orphan daughter of Charles Heathcote, Adam Heathcote's brother, who died twelve years ago, in Adam Heathcote's presence, and—in mine. Adam was, even then, a widower, and Silvia was a little girl, some nine years old.—Through his long sickness I had waited on her father—watching his hourly sinking. —I knew that Adam was to be his sole executor.—The dying father deemed his brother's youth and circumstances warranted his own belief that he had chosen Silvia's guardian well—yet, when the sick man had the hale one sitting beside his bed one day—'Brother,' he said 'my struggles, through the past night, 'gainst my impending fate, were fierce and long. This morn was ushered in by pain and sadness.—My heart's —scarce beating—now. I must soon leave you.—My Time-affairs—are settled. I near Eternity, and—trust.—Yet, there's a subject presses on me more, perhaps, than prudence bids or Heaven approves,—the child— my only child—my darling Silvia. For me life scarce retains another charm or obligation.—It is not for myself, this sorrow, though her prattle I no more shall hear as the joy-music of my house, drowning her mother's dirge—though I no more shall look down, while she nestles at my knee, through her dark eye's clear depths into the heaven that lights her lovely and unworldly face, or smooth her shining tresses for the pleasure 'tis to touch them, or assist her gleeful sports, grateful that every child-home hath such joy—not for myself this grief—God's will be done!—but when her Stay—her poor Protector—'s gone—when to the mercies of a dangerous World I leave her—who will aid her ?—Adam, will—you ? .... Thanks!—where's your hand ?—How dark!—We're parting—on THE RIVER'S brink.—You—are to represent—me—you alone—my Silvia's guardian,—in your hands I—leave—this dying Trust. And —oh, Adam!—by the bonds of brotherhood—by human sympathies— eternity's awards—I now beseech and charge you to fidelity! Guard her —as father to the fatherless!—a dying brother's blessing your . . .' —then turned his face, in silence, to the wall—and no man saw the shadow that passed o'er it.

[MARGERY *pauses (while* MARA *covers her face with her Handkerchief and weeps), and then reads again.*

"We knew that he was dead, yet knew not how *at once* we knew it:—no struggle—not a stir. As though the death-room had out-whispered it from some dread, more than death-like, stillness we stood there—awe-stricken—gazing on the ground—until—a strange thrill shook us to a staggering sense of the reality—and we wept out,—and went forth with the unsteady steps of woe.—

[*pauses again, while both seem overcome by their emotions, and then reads further.*

"Then, Silvia's home was here, and—she forgot her grief.—The hours winged on, and the girl's beauty grew upon her life as light on morn in summer. All things loved her:—and when her uncle's care and her affection seemed mingled into mutual esteem the years were counted eighteen from her birth, and months went merrily.—

[*a longer pause, during which* MARGERY *seems overcome by grief and* MARA *waits with painful, grave anxiety,—and then the reading is resumed.*

"But, then, there came a sad, sad change. Some trivial domestic difference, which led to others, serious, estranged them.—Quarrels came. Recrimination brought recrimination and—then—a storm of wrath; and servants heard him utter some strange words, which might have been a warning or a threat or doubt expressed,—no one could tell exactly what they were—but they were something about her dying early, and the Estate she *should* inherit.—And then—('tis two years since)—we missed her,—she was gone from home—we knew not whither.—No one has dared to openly accuse the Squire of knowing anything about her disappearance—but almost every one suspects him,—in short—'tis thought he—killed her;—though there's no *proof* that she is even dead."

*Mara.* [*as* MARGERY *re-folds the Letter and puts it in her Pocket*] How shocking!

*Margery.* Yes:—but—something still more shocking has occurred.—Flor' went yesterday into the village,—and has not returned, you know?

*Mara.* Yes.

*Margery.* [*looking at her curiously*] Have you heard what happened yesterday?

*Mara.* I have, this morning, heard a reason given for her absence;—what has she been saying?

*Margery.* [*sighing, after reflecting for some time*] Yes—every one but the unhappy Squire himself has heard of it.

*Mara.* [*with surprise*] Has n't *he* heard of it?

*Margery.* Not yet—but he will hear of it within an hour,—I've spoken to the Vicar, and he has kindly promised me to break it to him.—[*weeping,—and then recovering herself, and speaking impressively*] *I* attach no importance, Mara, to the rare discovery at the meadow yesterday. As to the clothes—Flora knew very little—almost nothing—of Miss Heathcote or her mode of dressing,—in fact, 'tis but because I know the girl so well that I am not surprised to hear she *thinks* she knows a single article of out-door clothing which Silvia wore,—and, for the rest—if Silvia Heathcote's dead—she is not—was not—buried *there*;—for many reasons I feel sure of this.

*Mara.* But don't you think their finding these things yesterday was strange?

*Margery.* It's evident that there's some mystery about it, but, judging from what I know of Flora, I do *not* think it strange that she should fancy what she does.

*Mara.* [*thoughtfully*] I see.—Well—you know best.—You ought to know the house's inmates well—the Squire an' all—you have been here so long:—twelve years, I think you said?

*Margery.* 'Twelve years!'—why, Mara! I was here when he was born!

*Mara.* [*in astonishment*] Who?—Squire Heathcote?

*Margery.* Ay!

*Mara.* Indeed?—here ever since?

*Margery.* Well—no,—I once spent three whole years of happiness away from here. I'd married—a poor clergyman. But—[*weeping*] one dark day—I—laid my husband where my little one was sleeping—in the grave:—and—like the Jewish woman that we mentioned—widowed, and childless, I came back again, and—here have since remained.

*Mara.* [*musingly*] Well—that was sad indeed!—[*after a rather prolonged silence*] How old is Squire Heathcote?

*Margery.* Why do you ask?

*Mara.* Because I thought he was as old as you, or nearly so.

*Margery.* [*very sorrowfully*] He is not forty-three yet, Mara,—time has worn him mercilessly since these troubles came;—and that reminds me, child, of the advice I promised.—There is and has been in this house much sorrow, as you hear—but, with regard to all things excepting that about which we've been speaking, 'the Heathcotes' are respected. Though proud and passionate they're generous, just, and clever, and cordial in their manner toward every one,—George, even now,'s a favourite in Stebbington—even 'the Blackbournes' like him, though of late they have opposed his suit to Bertha—as, you say, the girls have told you. Yet, latterly, we've had the servants change so frequently that I am growing peevish with them. They've been engaged at distant places, and have come and gone away again almost upon arriving—as you will go.—'Twas not because they thought their characters would suffer through their being here—it was the *gloom* they dreaded,—therefore, my girl, if that which happened yesterday had not occurred I might have coaxed you to remain with me. But, as you can't but see, however unimportant I, in some respects, may think this disinterment in the meadow, 'twill doubtless bring, at once, fresh trouble upon Mr. Heathcote, and, should aught

serious happen to him, George will be a wretched, wretched-looking, dread-inspiring master, and, under *any* circumstances, *I* shall not be *gay*,—and so—[*rising*] you'd better think of bidding us 'good bye'; —and when you go—*wherever* you may go—God bless you!

*Mara.* [*rising, and looking intently on the ground; and then fixing a calm, determined look on* MARGERY] Margery—you think the Squire innocent?

*Margery.* [*with a quiet and confident but sorrowful smile*] I am *sure* that Silvia and her uncle loved each other well; and I am *sure* that, if she's dead, her *uncle* did not—kill her.

*Mara.* [*smiling*] Did not the Jewish woman you have mentioned know a Moabitess?

*Margery.* [*also smiling, but still pensively*] Yes.

*Mara.* And when the Jewish woman would have journeyed back to Judah—weeping—and alone—did not the Moabitess say—[*holding out both her hands to* MARGERY] "Bid me not *leave* thee?"

[*Then—as the Music of "Forgive, Blest Shade" (played very slowly) is heard as from Harp-strings in some distant portion of the Manorhouse*—MARGERY *takes, sadly,* MARA'S *outstretched hands and draws her gently to her bosom, and kisses her*

*bowed forehead.—And then, for a few moments, they look upon each other tenderly,—and then, with each an arm around the other's waist, they walk toward the window, where they stand, forth looking, as the Scene is changed to*

SCENE THE SIXTH.—*The* SIDE OF THE FRONT OF STEBBINGTON CHURCH *again.*

[*An Organ-Fugue is heard, and Worshippers leave the Church-porch by its side and front entrances. Some of them gather in a Group on the far side of the Porch's front entrance and stand as if curious to see something or some one that is expected to issue from it. Those who leave the Church by the side entrance of the Porch come down the Avenue of Trees and quit the Scene by the Right Second Entrance. Then—at the last, when almost all have gone—*HEATHCOTE, *followed at the distance of a few paces by* DOCTOR PENDLEBURY *and his Lady, comes out of the Church and down the Avenue, walking very slowly,—and* PENDLEBURY *and his Lady overtake him and pass him and seem to shun him.—Then,* HEATHCOTE, *seemingly absorbed in grief, midway from the back, stands looking on the ground, while people at the Porch, and some who have apparently returned and now are peeping from the Trees at the Right Second Entrance, watch him with mingled curiosity and terror. And then—the Organ-music ceases and the Organist, appearing at the Porch, hurries away in the direction opposite the front Porch-entrance,—and then the Watchers vanish, and he is left alone.*

*Heathcote.* [*very dejectedly*] Two years—only two years!—and they—seem longer far than all the time I knew from early boyhood until—*then*!.... I dreamed, last night, I saw her kissing Bertha Blackbourne.... And then they both clapped hands, and laughed aloud, —and then clapped hands again,—and George.... Alas! poor George.... !

[*And* PARSON POMFRET *and the Sexton come out, talking, from the Church; and when the Sexton, having locked the Church-door, goes away in the direction opposite the front Porch-entrance,* POMFRET *comes down the Avenue toward* HEATHCOTE *and lays his left hand friend-like upon his shoulder and, as he turns round, offers him the other, which* HEATHCOTE *takes and, pressing it in silence, seems almost overcome by* POMFRET'S *sympathy.*

*Pomfret.* [*looking at* HEATHCOTE *kindly*] Are you well, Sir? [*as* HEATHCOTE *shakes his head*] You are sad?

*Heathcote.* [*after nodding affirmatively and looking for some time, fixedly, at* POMFRET] Do I *so* look sad, then?—or is it only that you know I've *cause* for sadness, that you tell me, with a seeming question, I am sad?

*Pomfret.* Your looks are sad, I see,—your grief has cause, I know,—but 'tis not what I see, or what I know

about its past that prompts me to its mention,—I have made "sad" a first word in accosting you because I have sad news for you,—[*as* HEATHCOTE *looks at him, alarmed*] nay, be calm.—Perhaps you can guess its nature?

*Heathcote.* [*excitedly, and already almost losing his voice through painful suspense*] No! tell me!

*Pomfret.* [*with long pauses between his sentences*] All that remains—of Silvia—is found.

*Heathcote.* [*after looking for some moments, shocked and bewildered, at* POMFRET] Dead?

*Pomfret.* It is supposed so.

[HEATHCOTE *stands staring vacantly before him,—and then his senses seem to reel, and, staggering a little, he falls (as* POMFRET *starts toward him) —without a word—with just a feeble sigh, and with his face toward the Church—heavily forward, and—lies stretched, senseless, on the ground.*

*Pomfret.* [*aside, after looking for a moment thoughtfully upon the prostrate figure*] Has this man slain his ward?—Men do dissemble and dissemble well:—but .... [*shaking his head incredulously—and then stooping over, and speaking to,* HEATHCOTE] Mr. Heathcote!—[*getting no answer*] Nay, this is worse

than I anticipated!—Let me see!—yes!—[*raising* HEATHCOTE'S *head and shoulders and lifting him, unconscious, over into a sitting posture and supporting him against his knee*] there—that's it!—[*when he has bent over him awhile*] Sir!—Heathcote! Mr. Heathcote! Squire!—[*after another pause and with his face still bending over* HEATHCOTE'S] Are you better, Sir?—[*still getting no answer*] Umph!—why—this is bad!—[*as* HEATHCOTE *sighs*] Ah!—that's well! [*after again waiting*] Better, Mr. Heathcote?

*Heathcote.* [*faintly*] Yes—better—thank you—better.

*Pomfret.* I'm sorry—very sorry, to have moved you thus—I did not mean to do so.

*Heathcote.* No:—but—I'm foolish—very foolish—now,—almost a child.

*Pomfret.* [*encouragingly*] No no; you've not the nerve you had a year or two ago, but you're not childish yet, and—[*impressively*] must not be so.

*Heathcote.* [*looking at him anxiously*] Tell me your news—you have not told me all?

*Pomfret.* Well, no,—but—there—sit still awhile—plenty of time!—there—we have plenty of time!

[POMFRET *manages, awhile, to keep him quiet, and then—*

*Heathcote.* [*in a voice growing much stronger*] Where was she buried?—what do you mean by 'found?'

*Pomfret.* Nay—presently, Squire!—presently!

*Heathcote.* [*rising—evidently weak, but, as evidently, very much excited and very determined*] Pomfret! I feel that I would—*could*—climb the Andes, *now*, to hear this news! Where was she buried?

*Pomfret.* In your own meadow—in the corner by Beech Lane—where George has just begun to have the new sheds built.

*Heathcote.* [*in a quiet tone, but with an excited look, as though afraid to think he'd heard or understood aright*] Eh?

*Pomfret.* That is—if—er—if it is her . . . [*louder and more decidedly*] Pardon me, Mr. Heathcote, I am not speaking so, perhaps, as to be understood. Yesterday, latish in the afternoon, some men, while digging in the corner of the meadow there, discovered, scarcely three feet from the surface, a hat, and then a shawl,—and then—as it is feared—all that remains of—Silvia Heathcote.

*Heathcote.* [*with sorrowful, contemptuous incredulity*] Some one buried *there?*—*Silvia*—buried—there?

*Pomfret.* It would seem so.

*Heathcote.* [*quietly, and half aside*] Pshaw!—[*to* POMFRET, *and as if recollecting himself*] Who says—saw—did all this?—Why do they talk of *Silvia* being buried—there?—Was George there?—does he know?

*Pomfret.* Doctor Pendlebury thinks, Sir, that the poor girl buried there was nineteen when she died, or thereabout, and one of your old servants has declared—the hat and shawl were Silvia's.—[*after pausing—and while* HEATHCOTE *bows his head upon his breast and seems deeply affected*] George was at Ortwell when this happened:—on his return the gossips no more dared to tell him of it than they'd have dared to tell it—to yourself.

*Heathcote.* [*raising his head and looking at him with intense curiosity and awakening apprehension*] 'Myself?'—'Than they'd have dared to tell it—to myself?'—'They dared not tell him of it?'....I scarcely understand you, Sir.

*Pomfret.* I'm sorry that you do not understand me:—I hoped to escape the painful task of plainly telling you that with this discovery—your name—is—er—everywhere in Stebbington—unpleasantly, and—er—seriously associated.—Er....

*Heathcote.* [*recoiling a few paces, and then drawing himself up in a dignified manner*] Hold, Sir! I now perceive your meaning!—Remember—the misery

you know—must know—I have endured for two years past has not been misery of one accused though unconvicted!—I have been sorrowing the loss of an unhappy girl—the lack of power to clear from horrid, foul suspicion (because 'twas *mere* suspicion *without accusation*) the proud name, 'Heathcote!'—I could not seek the only aid efficient—law, since no man had accused me, to myself or to another, in such manner that I could *prove* he had accused me!—I could not even prove the existence of the slanderous reports I knew existed!—but—[*more excitedly*] he who dares accuse me shall find that I have nerve enough to seek, and get, revenge for all the injuries I've suffered!—[*somewhat sternly and threateningly*] Don't be that man, Sir! I've respected you and would not injure you, though you're the first, who should have been the last, to hint at, to my face, what—I'll not name!—[*with great dignity*] Bethink you, Sir—the man who'd do the deed these wretched slanderers speak of must be a coward, liar, thief—must be mean, selfish, cruel—a fool, who thinks to compass and annihilate the gift most sacred of the GREAT GIVER and not be hurled to Hell by Conscience here, or Doom hereafter, or by both!—[*with intense scorn*] and are 'the Heathcotes' selfish, mean, or cruel? fools, thieves, or liars?—[*with increasing vehemence*] Mark me! though I'd nor take nor ask—and hold it impious to touch—nor would touch—mortality immortal, however

vile, for aught save murder—yet, to this point I'm vengeful—[*bursting into violent menace*] so sure as I am honest and no coward, whatever justice—only justice, mind!—will give as punishment for those who would be merciless to me or mine before they know us guilty—I'll have—I speak with awe—so help me G - - ! —and so—beware!

*Pomfret.* Why, Mr. Heathcote! this is as it should be! Remembering your natural courage, I have hoped —nay nay, *believed*—you would have nerve enough for your defence, if opportunity were given you by open accusation. I have not spoken with you to accuse you —only to warn you you'll be openly accused,—and when I tell you that I undertook to break this matter to both you and George this morning *only* at good old Margery's request you will not think me meddlesome, or hasty to condemn.

*Heathcote.* [*aside—starting*] Margery! Does—she —then, think the thing so serious for me—[*scared by some sudden thought, and speaking with profound emotion*] and *George*—that she lacked courage to tell either what needed to be told?—[*to* POMFRET—*and collecting himself, and speaking with less apparent alarm*] Pardon me, Sir, the hastiness which thought you were of those who, for the pleasure—for the pastime—gossip carelessly the guiltless to destruction,—it

is indeed a solace to find that—you—are now—my friend.

*Pomfret.* [*with warmth*] Now is the time, Sir, to declare the good opinion which I hold—have held of you! That, to speak shunned folk fair, or give a man —whate'er his worth—the hand of friendship just when Providence seems frowning on him's not the world's way —not thought wisdom—not called 'quite the prudent thing,' right well I know! but, then, the world and I do, or should, differ!.... [*with less warmth—but still respectfully*] Yet, you'll remember, Sir, I was Miss Heathcote's friend as well as yours, and can hold no man guiltless of her fate—if foul play's in it—who cannot show I've no strong reasons for suspecting him.

*Heathcote.* [*anxiously—after hesitating a moment*] Do you suspect me?

*Pomfret.* [*first deliberating—and then speaking very gravely*] I do not know that you are innocent, but think you so, and I shall speak and act according to my thought till men have—proved the contrary.

*Heathcote.* [*giving him his hand*] I fear that, now, my warmest friend can't say for me much more, Sir. [*grasping* POMFRET'S *more warmly*] I'll say 'good-bye'—for I must go—to trouble I had better meet than suffer it to overtake me.

*Pomfret.* [*cheeringly*] Good-bye!—and God be with you, Mr. Heathcote.

*Heathcote.* [*firmly and hopefully*] Amen! and thank you, Sir.

[*As* HEATHCOTE *hastens away by the Right Second Entrance, and* POMFRET, *with a steady, measured pace, goes down the Avenue and disappears at the back in the direction opposite the front Porch-entrance, "The Dead March" from "Saul" commences, and a few bars introduce*

SCENE THE SEVENTH.—*The* ANTECHAMBER *in "Heathcote Manorhouse" again, furnished as seen when occupied by* MARGERY *and* MARA, *only that, now, the Table is littered with Law-books, Deeds, Writing-materials etc., and has a Writing-desk upon it—at which* HEATHCOTE *is sitting, writing.*

[HEATHCOTE *pauses, and touches the Bell-pull, and then resumes his writing, and, after a few seconds—* MARA *enters by the Door at the Left Second Entrance.*

*Heathcote.* [*raising his head as* MARA *waits just inside the Door*] Send Margery to me, please.

*Mara.* Yes, Sir.

[MARA, *crossing to the Screen, goes round to the back of it and out by the Door behind it at the Right Upper Entrance, and* HEATHCOTE *goes on writing. —Then* MARA *returns, followed by* MARGERY, *who looks very sad, and* MARA *leaves the room by the Door at the Left Second Entrance, and* HEATHCOTE *raises his head and turns it a little toward* MARGERY *but with his glance still upon the Table, as though, for the moment, he can scarcely disengage his thoughts from his occupation sufficiently to recollect what he wants.*

*Heathcote.* [*collecting himself—leaning back in his Chair—and looking kindly and almost cheerfully at* MARGERY] Beg pardon, Margery,—er—did you find that key—the drawer-key we were talking of, you know?

*Margery.* O! long ago, and told you of it, Squire! Don't you remember that 'twas, after all, where you have always put it—in the *other* drawer?

*Heathcote.* Ah—yes—I recollect now!—Well—see, Margery!—you may fetch me, if you will, a packet of old letters from that drawer,—they're lying on the top, banded together with a bit of tape.

*Margery.* [*sighing, as she turns to go*] Yes—*I* know.

*Heathcote.* Be sure you lock the drawer again—and—er—keep the key yourself,—don't put it where you found it.

*Margery.* [*mournfully, as she disappears behind the Screen and goes away by the Door at the Right Upper Entrance*] Yes—very well.

*Mara.* [*in great agitation—reappearing at the Door at the Left Second Entrance*] Oh, Sir! Sir! you're wanted, please!

[*Almost before the words are out of* MARA'S *mouth a ruddy-faced, burly Constable—somewhat showily dressed in a dark Green cut-away Coat, Yellow-topped Boots, high Shirt-collars, a Red-and-yellow Neckerchief, a Large fob-Watch-chain and a Broad-brimmed Hat—appears (together with a Military Officer and four Soldiers) quickly, behind her, and* HEATHCOTE, *who has seen them before* MARA *is well aware that they have entered, starts up from his Chair.*

*Heathcote.* [*excitedly and loudly*] Merciful Heavens! *so* soon?

[*And, as the Officer indicates to the Soldiers, consecutively, by glances of his eye, the spots they are to occupy, and one Soldier places himself at each Door and one by the Screen, and the Officer himself remains with a sort of easy gravity a pace or two before the Soldier who keeps the Door by which they have all entered, the Constable approaches the Table.*

*Constable.* [*in a business-like but respectful manner*] Your name 's 'Adam Heathcote,' Sir, I think?

*Heathcote.* [*bowing slightly and speaking with dignity*] My name is 'Adam Heathcote.'

*Constable.* I scarce need tell ye', I suppose, my business?—I 've got a warrant [*showing it*] here, for your arrest. You 're charged with murder—the murder of one, Silvia Heathcote, your ward and niece, who lived here with ye' some two years ago.—You 're my prisoner.

*Heathcote.* [*calmly*] Where shall I sleep to-night?

*Constable.* In Ortwell Jail, Sir, I'm afraid—we 're going there straight off.

*Heathcote.* [*in the act of re-seating himself*] You can spare a minute, I suppose?

*Constable.* Twenty, Sir, if ye' want 'em.

[HEATHCOTE *bows a slight acknowledgment of the courtesy, and sits down, and writes, hurriedly, a Note, and folds it—while the rest look on in silence.*

*Heathcote.* [*handing the Note to* MARA, *who is standing by the Table, near him, with an expression of pity and terror in her face*] For Master George—the instant he returns.

[*As* MARA *receives the Note with a curtsey,* MARGERY *re-enters with the Letters she was sent for—glances round—stands, a moment, stupified and motionless —shrieks—and (before any one can reach her) falls —and* MARA *and* HEATHCOTE *(who also pulls the Bell-rope) spring toward her.*

*Heathcote.* [*to* MARA, *after lifting* MARGERY'S *hand and kissing it while the slow Music of "The Dead March" very faintly recommences*] Tell her I have left with George a message for her and that *that* must be my 'Good bye' for to-night. [*to the Officer*] Quick, Sir, please!

[*Before* HEATHCOTE *has done speaking (the Soldier at the Door at the Left Upper Entrance having, at a signal from the Officer, placed himself beside the Soldier at the Door at the Left Second Entrance)* JULIA *opens the Left Upper-Entrance-Door which the Soldier has quitted—looks in—shrieks, and runs away again—and returns instantly, accompanied by* LAURA *and* CARY, *who rush in with her and, together with* MARA, *form a kneeling group round* MARGERY—*and (as* HEATHCOTE *seizes his Hat from the Table and the Door at the Left Second Entrance is thrown open and, with "The Dead March" heard a little louder, a Procession is formed and, first, the Officer, then two Soldiers, then* HEATHCOTE, *then the other two Soldiers, and, last, the Constable, slowly leave the Antechamber —with* JULIA *and* CARY, *while they kneel by poor*

*old* MARGERY, *gazing terror-stricken after them—), a Forest-picture shifting past the Front a moment and the Music modulating to "Though Sweet the Hour"—all's changed to*

SCENE THE EIGHTH.—*The Large* OPEN SPACE *in the Wood of Oaks again—with the distant view of a Village, on rising ground, with its Church-spire, etc.—It is the place in which* GEORGE HEATHCOTE *was discovered romping with* BERTHA *and chasing her about among the Trees, but it is, now, without the Table, Benches, etc.—The Scene is very shadowy, but it is bright Moonlight at the Back and little streaks of Silvered Light break through the Branches in the Foreground and the Middle-distance here and there, while —the loud warbling of* A NIGHTINGALE *is heard.*

[*The warbling ceases, suddenly, as though intruders were approaching, and—after a few moments—some one, hidden by the foliage, and with a voice youthful enough to be* GEORGE HEATHCOTE'S, *sings.*

Though sweet the hour when Love believed
All happiness its own,
Alas! its promise but deceived,
And I am sad and lone!
The love I gave is ardent still!
The love returned's yet true!
But mocking Fate hath laughed her will,
And we must weep 'Adieu!'

The trysting tree is charmless now—
In cheerless paths I stray,
And find how fruitless was each vow
We cherished yesterday!

For though my love is ardent still—
Her love for me yet true—
Ah! mocking Fate hath laughed her will,
And we must weep 'Adieu!'

[*The singing also ceases, and, after awhile,* GEORGE *(still well dressed—like a young Country-gentleman, but, now, in sober Grey) appears at the Left Upper Entrance, with his arms folded and his head upon his breast, and, glancing round as if looking for some one, sighs, and crosses slowly to the Back Right Centre, and disappears behind the Bush on the far side of the Right Upper Entrance.—Then (the warbling of the Nightingale heard as if somewhat farther off) he comes back in the same slow, mournful manner, and, near the Trees through which he at first entered, halts.*

*George.* No—not a word.—Day after day—for months—Hell in the home which once to you was Heaven!—A father's frowns and threats, a mother's wept entreaties, the pity of the worthy, the unworthy's scorn—all battled 'gainst or borne for me—your only comfort glimmering through the—hope—that I escape the pain of knowing how crushed my name—how damning and degrading 't has become to know and love 'a Heathcote!'—That your good father, without hating me, has learned to wince a little at—has horror of—the thought of marrying his family to mine—that, if you see me it must be by stealth—I know—because you, Bertha, cannot help my knowing it;—but, of your real suffering

—your misery's extent—you speak—no word—no word—no—not a word.—Events now show your father has been right,—and—for the wretchedness you have endured for me—the debt I owe you is—to set you free by asking leave to leave you—by telling you you ought not to continue this connection with me.—I feel as if e'en Heaven could not help me e'en to—bear—my grief's extremity did I omit to do you this bare justice. —And yet—my selfish cowardice keeps whispering, I shall know of suffering, through parting, so much more than you could know through clinging to me, that, the joyless freedom gained by you will be scarce worth my —nameless sacrifice.—Oh, Bertha! Bertha!—it is hard —heart-withering — nay — breathing death — to lose you!

[*Then, just as he's about to disappear among the Trees,* BERTHA *(elegant—in a grey Dress, black Mantle, and brown Hat and Ribbons) comes from behind the Bush before the Back Right Corner, and, seeing him turn sharply at the sound of her quick footsteps, hastens toward him and throws her arms around his neck.*

*They kiss each other silently.*

*Bertha.* [*after awhile, raising her head, reluctant, from his shoulder—holding it just a little back from*

*his—keeping her arms still round his neck—and looking him, with smiling love and earnest, in the face*] I've kept you waiting, George?

*George.* [*gravely but kindly*] No—not long, dearest.

*Bertha.* 'Tis through that pretty Nightingale—I thought I was a little early, and might linger, listening, till its music was so in my heart that I could bring its feeling, loving-sweet, to you.

*George.* [*gently untwining her arms from his neck, and retaining her hands in his*] Your heart is always tuned to tenderness and love—you had no need to listen.

*Bertha.* You do not mean, I hope, that I am melancholy in my love?—I would not be so,—no, I would be chèerful, and cheer you, George.

*George.* [*letting go her hands*] I know you would, my Bertha,—but—your voice has now become to me like that poor bird's—I listen to it, charmed—[*casting his eyes on the ground*] and—I am sad.

*Bertha.* [*taking his hand*] But why should my voice sadden you?—I've hoped 'twould help to charm *away* your sadness.

*George.* [*looking at her tenderly*] Yes—it should almost do so—it is passing sweet,—but—when I hear you, Bertha—I remember—my heavy grief, which will not suffer me to make you happy.

*Bertha.* [*smiling with sorrowful sweetness upon him*] Then let us *love* in silence, and *talk* of *grief*, for I, at heart, am sad, too—very sad,—and if a little sigh of love's should come 'mong those of grief—it will be holier than words, and less unwelcome.

*George.* [*speaking in a low, rapt tone, and looking at her with a grave half-smile*] How beautiful you are!

*Bertha.* [*tearful, and trembling with glad emotion*] Am I, George?—I'd fain be so because I think that you would have it so.—[*raising her eyes to heaven*] God keep you thinking I am beautiful!

[GEORGE *gently puts her arms around his neck once more, and, sadly, their lips meet again. There's one fond, mutual, lingering kiss, and then—he lays her head upon his bosom.*

*After some moments,* BERTHA, *disengaging quietly her arms from* GEORGE'S *shoulders, turns and walks slowly from him a few paces, and dries her tears—while he stands, wildered, with his head bowed on his breast, in thought and sorrow.*

*Bertha.* [*turning partly round toward him, but with her eyes upon the ground*] You said you'd something you would say to me to-night, George—[*raising her head and looking at him*] what is it?

*George.* [*hesitatingly*] Well, Bertha—I, er—can hardly tell you,—perhaps, er—perhaps it would be best—er—best *un*said.

[*A pause.*

*Bertha.* [*quietly, but with a little wonder and anxiety*] 'Best unsaid!'

*George.* [*with great embarrassment*] Er—yes—that is to say—er . . . . Well, Bertha—I am wavering—I have no courage—I'm nervous.—Perhaps, for a day or two—er—we'd better let things go on as they are.

*Bertha.* [*looking confounded*] 'Let things go on as they are!'—What things?—I do not—I—I do not understand.

[*A pause again.*

*George.* [*with a little more confidence*] I'm nervous—truly—if I approach this subject in such a way that *you* don't understand.

*Bertha.* What subject?

[*Another pause.*

*George.* [*with a deep, sad voice*] Are you happy?

*Bertha.* [*thinking—and then answering firmly, but kindly*] No:—what then?

*George.* Does not your *un*happiness result from our engagement?

*Bertha.* Then?

*George.* [*weeping, silently, but with great emotion*] I have been wondering—whether it is kind—to ask you to endure for me—and with me—the .... [*sobbing bitterly—his face covered with his hands*] all that me and mine may—*be obliged* to bear.

[*He turns—and moves a step or two toward the Back—and leans his head upon his arm against a Tree (his back to* BERTHA*)—and vents his grief,—and* BERTHA *remains mute—her bowed face hidden like his own by tear-moist hands.—Then, when his grief has seemingly abated,* BERTHA *goes, gently, to him and, laying one hand lovingly upon his shoulder, with her other takes one of his,—which he resigns to her (as he turns partly round toward her), leaning still upon his other arm against the Tree, and looking dreamily, despairingly, upon the ground.*

*Bertha.* [*in a quiet, firm voice*] George—you have said enough—almost too much. I thank you for the

generosity which would not leave the task, if needful, of mentioning such a thing as parting to poor me. —Now, . . . .

*George.* [*raising his head, and fervidly interrupting her*] You have other ties, remember, Bertha—parents, friends—whose interests, position, character . . .

*Bertha.* [*also interrupting*] I know, I know! who, too, for *this* will thank you, perhaps, some day! But —answer me!—to-night, George, you came here to . . . . ?

*George.* To break this matter to you.

*Bertha.* And then—you would defer it?

*George.* Yes

*Bertha.* Why?

*George.* Need you ask?

*Bertha.* Why?

*George.* Bertha!

*Bertha.* Why, George? why?

*George.* Because—I love you.

*Bertha.* Then you are right—there's no occasion yet to talk about—'farewells.'

*George.* 'No occasion *yet*!'—Bertha—do you remember what has happened?—what—may—happen some days hence?

*Bertha.* I do.

*George.* And think it will not be more painful for us to re-open then this subject than to talk about it now when 'tis begun?

*Bertha.* You need not—have—to talk of this—of parting:—imagine *then* that I am asking whether you still love me, and I'll imagine you are answering 'yes' and think what I now utter—'No occasion yet.'

*George.* Bertha . . . .

*Bertha.* Well, George?

*George.* 'T will come at last; and . . . .

*Bertha.* [*in a tenderly-impassioned and enthusiastic manner and taking his right hand in both of hers*] When the worst—the *worst*—has *come*—nay, while I've breath—but own you love me, and I'll say of parting—'No occasion yet!!'

[*She bows her head upon her bosom, and he again leans with his head upon his arm against the Tree.*

*Bertha.* [*breaking, at length, the silence*] Come, George! we will not talk of what you lured me here to talk about—we cannot—dare not—do so. Besides, 'tis scarce a time to talk of love at all—not even of love's partings. We'll talk about your father—Silvia

—and our sorrow,—and I will weep, while with you, with you, as I will pray, when from you, for you,—and Heaven, will help us, in some way we wot not of.

*George.* [*turning toward her—joining his other hand to hers—and looking at her tenderly*] Nay, dearest Bertha, it is this very cause—this sadness and this darkness—this horror of a future which is too horrid to permit a thought or word of love—e'en of love's partings—that made me dread to think of your fate linked to mine and almost wish that we *were* parted.

*Bertha.* 'Almost!'—not quite, then, did you wish it?

*George* Oh! I am weak, and—could not!

*Bertha.* Nay, you are good, and—would not.

*George.* You judge me from yourself.

*Bertha.* No—if I judged you from myself I should, George, think more evil of you—for *I* am selfish.

*George.* You?

*Bertha.* Yes,—listen, Dear! Suppose the worst, and we two parted—we should be sorry for ourselves and for each other and have two sorrows each:—and then suppose us gone, *together*, away from here, to hide ourselves 'mong strangers—*you*'d grieve for both and have two sorrows still, while *I*, grieved but for you, should have but one.

*George.* Your parents?

*Bertha.* [*reflecting, as though with pain and fear*] True! true!—yet . . . . Oh! do not argue, George! but let me still love—*near* you!!

*George.* 'Let' you?—'let' you!—oh, 'tis surpassing love that makes the sad request!—near me to let you—love—'s to let you—weep—Sweet! near me!

*Bertha.* Well, *let* me weep, so 'tis but on your bosom!—the tears will ease a heart which left alone—will break!

*George.* Oh, Bertha! dearest Bertha!—I—I know not how to answer you—I am not worthy of such love!

*Bertha.* You—George!—'not worthy' of poor Bertha's love!—nay, 'tis that you're too worthy and would give her in exchange more than your noble self—not knowing what your noble self is worth—and cannot! Oh, had not my fond heart grown larger—thinking of the love 't has won—'t would be a little price indeed for yours!—You, George—you—'not know how you should answer me!' . . . . [*as* GEORGE *is about to kiss her*] Yes, answer with a kiss,—yet—[*holding her head a little back from his and yearning toward him with a look of tender supplication*] tell me first, it means that nought shall part us.—[*finding* GEORGE *does not answer, but stands gazing away from her, as if thinking and irresolute*] Oh, answer, Dear! the

moments fly so fast and I've—though brief our meeting seems—already so long over-stayed my stolen time that I dare stay no longer!—I go, you know, for both our sakes!

*George.* So soon?

*Bertha.* [*with a tearful smile*] So 'soon!'—what!—you that but now talked almost bravely about our separating till—eternity!—you—think it hard to part until—to-morrow?

[GEORGE—*gently disengaging himself from her—walks, slowly, with his head bowed, toward the Bush—and then returns—while she stands anxiously observing him.*

*George.* [*after fixing a long, sad, searching look upon her*] Do you believe my father innocent or guilty?

*Bertha.* [*firmly, and as if a little hurt at the question*] You know I always have believed and now believe him innocent.

*George.* But have you any doubt?

*Bertha.* None.

*George.* Yet know his danger?

*Bertha.* Well.

*George.* And yet you say ....?

*Bertha.* That you have said you love me.

*George.* [*taking both her hands, and looking at her with intense affection*] A little while—and yours I may not be:—I cannot be another's. Until your weeping message comes—"We must forget"——I'm yours.

*Bertha.* [*with a tearful but triumphant smile, and a grand outburst of woman-like, angelic devotedness*] And I—come weal, come woe—what *will*—am yours, yours only, George—[*falling upon his bosom*] for ever!

[*An interval of silence.*

*Bertha.* [*slowly raising her head, and taking his hand again*] And now . . . .

*George.* Until to-morrow.

[*With emotion more subdued than hitherto their lips meet again—there is one long, tender kiss—and then (while the Music of "Though Sweet the Hour" is very faintly heard) they part, in silence—*GEORGE *going, slowly, in among the Trees at the Left Second Entrance, and* BERTHA *with a quick step hastening down the Scene (wiping her tears away the while) toward the Bush, behind which with a farewell glance behind her she disappears.*

*And then comes*—FELTON, *who (at the Right Second Entrance, starting and then scowling with hate and jealousy) appears (unnoticed by them) just in time to catch sight of* BERTHA'S *retiring figure and, crossing the Scene, follows* GEORGE.

*And then, the Music of "Waggoners Whistle," etc., introduces*

## ACT THE FOURTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.—*A poor and lonely* COTTAGE *in the Village of Wailingdale, in Leicestershire.—The Cottage stands on the farther side of the Right Upper Entrance—is small—has somewhat dilapidated white Walls—two Steps up to its Door—a little rough Bench under its Window—and a Thatched Roof.—The other parts of the sides of the Scene, consist of Trees.—At the Back is a view of a Valley gradually narrowing and stretching upward and away till it ends in a Bank which forms the under-side of a Road by which, at a great height, the Valley is crossed.—The Road forms the Horizon against a very light Sky; and, along the Road, a Waggoner, seeming small in the distance, moves slowly, with his Team and a Load of Hay. —On the sides of the Valley (throughout its whole length, here and there, at various elevations) are seen—lowly Cottages, a little Schoolhouse, a rustic Church, and, in the half-distance, the Side of a long Factory with many Windows and a tall Furnace-chimney.—The Cottages all stand so that one or more of their Windows can be seen.*

[*When the Curtain rises,* LILLY MANSFIELD *(not as before, in 'Mourning,' but in the ordinary dress of the Wailingdale peasantry) is discovered, lifting up by the hands, and dancing about, her little niece,*

FANNY *(now a child of five years old), and humming to the Music; and* MRS. MANSFIELD, *in somewhat similar attire (young, and, though having in her face the traces of much pain and sorrow, not unhandsome), is sitting on the Cottage Door-step at her Needlework.*

*Lilly.* [*dancing* FANNY *about and singing to the music of "Waggoners Whistle"*] Rumti idity, heigh gee wo! Rumti idity heigh do! [*after stopping a moment and looking off to the left, as though she sees some one coming but quickly concludes that it's no one of consequence*] Rumti idity heigh gee wo! Rumti idity heigh do . . . . !

[*And, in the midst of their fun,* FELTON, *walking slowly, appears at the Entrance before the Left Front Grooves, consulting a Betting-book.—His attention is first distracted by* LILLY *and* FANNY, *and and then—he glances toward* MRS. MANSFIELD, *and starts with surprise.—As his eyes meet hers, she gives him a momentary but uneasy and searching look and again bows her head over her Needlework, which she seems to attentively examine—and then (turning her face from him) she rises and enters the Cottage.—*FELTON *looks after her a moment: and then, resuming the examination of his Betting-book, he walks slowly away (passing off before the Right Front Grooves)—having been scarcely heeded by* LILLY *or* FANNY.

*After a few seconds* MRS. MANSFIELD *reappears from the Cottage and approaches* LILLY *hastily and anxiously.*

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Do you know that man?

*Lilly.* That passed just now? yes,—that is—er—to-day I've seen him once before,—he's from Derbyshire, on his way back to Warwickshire, some of the folk were saying. He's here to see the Lawsons about some racehorse, or something of the sort.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*laying her hand impressively on* LILLY'S *arm*] *I* know him, Lilly.

*Lilly.* [*a little surprised*] Ah?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Yes.

*Lilly.* Does he know you?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* He did—perhaps.

*Lilly.* And Morris?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* No;—Morris knows *him* though—at least by hearsay,—some swindling rascal—er—[*hastily*] I can't explain at present, but—er—I don't, here, want to recognize him. He looked at me just now, and may come back, and, if he should, betraying curiosity about me—I'm Mrs. Mansfield; the child is Fanny Mansfield; and how long I've been married—he must guess—*you* need n't know.

*Lilly.* [*laughing*] 'Need n't know?'—your husband's *sister*—'need n't know?'

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Do n't *tell* him you're our sister—you'll have to know too much, else.

*Lilly.* [*looking off in the direction in which* FELTON *went*] Well! you were right about his coming back, for—see!

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*as she turns and walks quietly into the Cottage again*] Yes—sure enough!

[*And presently, with quickened pace,* FELTON *re-enters—takes a few steps as if returning by the way he came—and stops as though attracted by the laughing sport of* LILLY *and the Child—as though, till now, he had not thought of halting.*

*Felton.* [*stooping, smilingly, and taking* FANNY'S *hand*] Well, pretty one! and who may you be? whose little girl are you?

[FANNY *is bashful and silent, and* FELTON *takes a penny from his pocket and offers it—but she is still shy and does not take it.*

*Lilly.* Take it, Fanny! take it! and say—'Thank you, Sir!'

*Fanny.* [*hiding her eyes with her right arm—and holding out her left hand for the penny*] Thank 'ou.

*Felton.* [*pleasantly*] And now—whose little girl are you?

*Lilly.* Tell the gentleman whose little girl you are, Dear.

*Fanny.* [*after some hesitation*] Mamma's.

[FELTON *and* LILLY *laugh.*

*Felton.* Well, I suppose you are; and Papa's too ain't you?—but what's your name?

*Lilly.* Tell the gentleman your name, Fanny—come! —say 'Fanny Mansfield, Sir!'—[*to* FELTON, *when she finds* FANNY *won't speak*] I'm afraid you won't get her to talk, Sir—she's very bashful.

*Felton.* So it seems.—[*to* FANNY] Well, tell me how old you are,—come! you can tell me that now—can't you?

*Fanny.* Nearly five.

*Felton.* Nearly five, are you?—*that's* a good girl, —I thought you'd find your tongue at last.—[*to* LILLY *and smiling*] I suppose you are not Mrs. Mansfield?

*Lilly.* O, dear, no! the person who was sitting at the door just now is Mrs. Mansfield.

*Felton.* [*aside*] The d---l! [*to* LILLY] Oh, indeed!—Well, she's a nice little girl:—er . . . .

[*A shrill Signal (as of a Piccolo-or-School-whistle-imitation of the fanfare of a Post-horn)—and* MRS. MANSFIELD, *coming hastily from the Cottage again, takes a step toward the Back Left Corner, away through which she looks happily as though seeing and welcoming the approach of the Signal-giver.*

*Lilly.* [*stooping down and laughing into* FANNY'S *eyes*] Hark! its Papa a-coming!—isn't it, Dear?

*Fanny.* E...yes.

[*And* MORRIS MANSFIELD *enters, with cheerful quiet dignity of manner—a respectable, poor Schoolmaster.*

*Felton.* I've been trying to make your little one talk, Mrs. Mansfield, but she seems to have lost her tongue.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*in a brusque, off-hand manner*] Ah, she'll soon find it again—let her alone for that! [*in a softer tone, to* MANSFIELD *whose motion forward to caress the child she stays by meeting him affectionately and gently drawing him*

*toward the Cottage*] Your signal was right welcome, Morris—I was just thinking you were late!—[*in her former off-hand manner, again to* FELTON *who is touching his Hat in answer to* MANSFIELD'S *bow*] Excuse us, Sir! my husband's dinner . . . .

*Felton.* [*bowing to them all as* LILLY *turns to follow* MORRIS *and* MRS. MANSFIELD *into the Cottage*] Don't mention it, I beg.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*as she enters the Cottage—not perceiving that* LILLY *and* FANNY *are following*] Come, Lilly—bring the child!

[LILLY *and* FANNY *trip in and shut the Door after them, and* FELTON—*who, bowing, seemed about to turn and go away—pauses.*

*Felton.* [*smiling and reflecting*] Umph!—well, 't was but a passing fancy,—I hardly thought it *could* be *her* either,—she looked too old,—and then—too short, a little, perhaps, for Heathcote's niece.—At all events, if she's been married—let me see!—say—half-a-dozen years—why—[*beginning to examine his Betting-book again, as the Music of "When Winds Breathe Soft" is very, very faintly heard commencing and he walks leisurely away by the Entrance before the Right Front Grooves*] that settles it.

[*And then, the Music, continued, introduces*

SCENE THE SECOND.—*The Back of* "THE FOWLER'S FORTUNE" *Alehouse again.*

[*Where* SIR JOHN BLACKBOURNE, *looking grave, and followed out as far as the Threshold by* DELLBROOK *(also looking grave), is discovered coming through the Door-way and down the Door-steps in the angle of the Building at the Back Left Corner.*

*Blackbourne.* [*as he appears—concluding some remark he seems to have begun inside the Alehouse*] .... and as to Fred's own father and that Leicestershire reversion, why, I suppose you're right. [*turning to* DELLBROOK, *who is standing at the top of the steps, just inside the Door*] At all events, a week 'll show us! Good day, Humphry!

*Dellbrook.* Good day, Sir John! good day! A pleasant walk!

*Blackbourne.* Thank you! Good day!

[*And* DELLBROOK—*bowing himself backward into the rural Hostelry—has gone.*

*And* BLACKBOURNE, *going toward the Back Right Centre meets—*JEREMIAH PENDLEBURY, *who approaches gravely from the Trees.*

*Blackbourne.* Ah! [*as they shake hands*] Good day, Doctor! how d'ye do?

*Pendlebury.* How do you do, Sir John? We've ....

*Blackbourne.* [*interrupting him*] You've heard about Fred Felton's vanishing, I suppose?

*Pendlebury.* Yes, and was going to mention him. No want, in Stebbington, of stuff to talk about—just now, at all events:—you were, of course surprised?

*Blackbourne.* Well—for the moment—yes;—but I've long thought it strange that he should hang about here doing nothing.—By the bye, his name's not Felton—I suppose you were aware of that?

*Pendlebury.* Not till to-day, Sir John. Though I have always thought that Felton, as Fred's father, looked rather young, I ....

*Blackbourne.* [*interrupting him again*] O, no! Fred's mother was a widow, and he some ten years old when Felton married her. Felton and Fred's mother parted [*considering*]—er—five years ago.

*Pendlebury.* Yes, that I've heard,—and she died shortly afterwards?

*Blackbourne.* Within a year or so, I think they say —yes. Just in time for her, perhaps, poor thing! Felton had spent her fortune.

*Pendlebury.* And Fred's too, it is said.

*Blackbourne.* 'T is said—but 't is n't certain, that. —Er—you were in Stebbington, I think, when he proposed for our Bertha?

*Pendlebury.* Just come among you—that is, when it was reported.

*Blackbourne.* O, the report was true enough!—he *did* so,—and, truth to tell, I thought his way of doing it straightforward. He told me he'd nor money nor lands, that really were his own, and laughed, and said he never looked on Fred as under a parental roof—*he* lived with *Fred*—Fred was provided for.—Whether he meant that what, as the boy's guardian, he was allowed to spend as for the boy was ample for them both—was ample for his queer establishment, or no, I can't, of course, decide—I understood him to mean something of the sort:—so—er—wondered at his impudence, and praised his honesty, and—er—let him go—my enemy for life, as I suppose.—I think he had a lover's fancy for our girl.—At all events, "'boy Fred' would be no burden,"—*that* was *clearly* meant,—and since then I've imagined he was n't meddling with Fred's fortune much.

*Pendlebury.* [*shaking his head*] *Too* much, I fear, Sir John.

*Blackbourne.* Well—you may be right—for, as a rule, betting men beggar every one about them—but—

anyhow, Fred's best away from here.—His mother's relatives are in the army, I believe, and have some influence, and, if so, soldiering's the best thing he can turn his thoughts to after the careless sort of life he has led. He's active, cheerful, bold, shrewd, and—er—can't, all circumstances reckoned, be called unsteady—and, under his own name, his friends will help him, you may rely upon it.

*Pendlebury.* [*with a movement as if impatient to be gone*] But how will Felton stand affected?

*Blackbourne.* Why, there's the question—in fact the only thing that made the boy's departure seem to me of even slight importance.—Fred did n't go without advice or counsel it would seem, although he left us with so little ceremony; but whether Felton, who, by the bye, I hear, returned to Stebbington last night, is one among his confidants has not transpired:—[*seeing* PENDLEBURY *still move as if impatient to go*] but I'm detaining you?

*Pendlebury.* Well, Sir John—er—I'll not pretend that I am not in haste—I'm on a little errand in connection with—er—this business of Heathcote's—er....

*Blackbourne.* [*assuming a friendly tone, but with his brows knit and looking annoyed*] Oh!—then, for the moment, we had better part! [*offering his hand somewhat hastily*] Good-by!

*Pendlebury.* [*shaking hands with him*] Good-by, Sir John!—[*as* SIR JOHN *walks off by the Back Right Centre and he himself walks toward, and enters, the Forest, at the House-corner by the Left Second Entrance, and the very, very faint Music of "When Winds Breathe Soft" is heard again*] Umph!—'t was thoughtless of me.—That name—'Heathcote'—will sound, I think, unpleasantly to you for many a day, Sir John!

[*Then, with the scarce-heard, plaintive Music ending slow, comes*

SCENE THE THIRD.—*The* FOREST-GLADE *again,—the place where* HEATHCOTE *was soliloquising when black* HUGH *overheard him—the spot with the felled Tree-trunk lying, huge, across a portion of it—*

[*And* FELTON *is discovered pacing to and fro, and pondering, audibly, but slowly.*

*Felton.* Fred gone!—Umph! I've expected it. Not the less annoying, though, for that!—*it* was not the time—we should have seemed *more* settled—*more* respectable just now than usual!.... Heathcote in prison?—why—that's well!—But then—the grave dis-

covered—where I thought—that—that—umph!—that mischief—hidden!—ay, for the third time opened!.... '*Third* time?'—pshaw, no! 'tis *Heathcote* that's accused—not *me*!—and the—thing—buried there—the gossip goes—is *Silvia*—[*nodding significantly, as if to his thought*] not my .... No, no—not her:—they think that she and I just parted in an ordinary way, by mutual consent, and that she died soon afterwards, away from me, and—fairly .... Heathcote! .... curse the Heathcotes!! curse 'em all!!! The Squire spurned me when I hinted at his niece's hand for Fred, and the niece laughed with scorn! and, now, his son, George—how my soul feasts upon its hate of him!—stands between me and her I would take penniless and, but for him, might have with thousands!—You were to blame, too, Blackbourne, in this matter!—when for myself I asked for Bertha's hand, and you refused me, this puppy had no place in Bertha's heart!.... But—I may have her yet. —Heathcote must not escape. Once hanged, and George a gallows-felon's son, Bertha would think—as her proud father thinks already—marriage with George impossible —and then—Blackbourne and daughter—humbled by the past—would listen, perhaps, to me.—Yes—I may have her yet!—*will* have her yet, if there is any power in hypocrisy!—at all events, you, Master George, shall not! nay, should not lay your drivelling lips against her damask cheek on the same pillow, though, to pre-

vent it, I'd to hang a hundred Heathcotes!!—Silvia—her uncle dead, her cousin gone, and I to Bertha married —may—if she likes—come back and, ghost-like, stare at us!—that is—if—she's alive!.... I wonder whether Heathcote 'finished' her?—we *do* such things.—[*walking, as footsteps are heard approaching, to the fallen Tree, and seating himself, and taking out his Betting-book, and pretending to examine it*] Who comes espying here?

*Pendlebury.* [*appearing at the Right Second Entrance, and starting a little as he sees* FELTON] Ah! Felton? [*as* FELTON *rises, smiling, and shakes hands with him*] how d'ye do?—I've disturbed you at your studies, I perceive.

*Felton.* [*carelessly putting his Betting-book into his pocket*] No, Doctor, no,—out for a little quiet walk, to see if it would cure the headache—that's all. T' was late when I got back to Stebbington last night, and I was tired—too tired to sleep,—or, perhaps, it was the news about poor Heathcote that kept me waking. Rather an awkward turn up, this, for him, just now, I fancy?

*Pendlebury.* [*thoughtfully*] Well—yes.

*Felton.* Er—this girl is positive, I hear, in what she has declared about the clothes?

*Pendlebury.* Well—yes,—very *positive.*

*Felton.* And there's no room to think that she's mistaken—no conflicting evidence?

*Pendlebury.* [*shaking his head*] She talks decidedly; her bold sincerity's undoubted; and no one contradicts her;—[*musingly*] and yet . . . .

*Felton.* [*with some interest in his manner*] 'And yet . . . .?'

*Pendlebury.* I can't help fancying that the clothes —the scattered clothes—had been there, undisturbed—well—longer than two years, and the—the—anatomical remains—much longer than the clothes.

*Felton.* [*looking momentarily aside with knitted brows and an anxious expression of countenance—and then assuming an easy tone of natural curiosity*] Ah, Doctor! why do you think so? Have you mentioned that?

*Pendlebury.* Well—no. You see, it may be *only* fancy—and—but, there! we can't discuss it now, for I'm in haste! I'm on an errand, by the bye, about this very business!—so, good day, Felton! wish you better of the headache!

*Felton.* [*as they shake hands*] Good day, Doctor! —thank you! [*taking a step or two toward the Right Second Entrance as* PENDLEBURY *goes off by the Left Second Entrance*] I'll get home, I think, and try if the fresh air has made me sleepy.—[*having sternly*

*watched* PENDLEBURY *away and then returned to, and reseated himself upon, the Tree-trunk*] You 'think the clothes have been there longer than two years?'—Umph! *others* must not think so.—[*after a pause*] Friend Shrivel is to have the management of the defence, I'm told.—[*after another pause and with a Mephistophelesian smile*] Ay—a thought now strikes me which, if carried out—would .... Yes yes,—so!.... You, Mrs. Mansfield now, are poor, and—I think—very poor,—what won't we do for money?.... See Shrivel first?—well—yes!.... These debts....? Revenge....? I .... must do something—or, in a year or two, must starve!.... [*with a low, reckless laugh*] Heathcote, say, with his fathers—and what harm?—he 'did' for Silvia, no doubt,—we *do* these things!.... Bertha—e'en in herself, a prize I'd fetch from H--l—[*smiling*] and then—the ample fortune—and Sir John calling me 'dear Son-in-law'!—Ha, ha!.... [*thinking till his brows knit, gradually, into a frown again*] Yes—if this thought holds ....!——But.... I'll see Shrivel first!—see Shrivel first ....

[*He remains a moment or two seated upon the Tree-trunk, silent, pondering, and frowning,—and then (with the Music of "O, Whistle, and I'll come to ye, my Lad") comes—*

SCENE THE FOURTH.——AUGUSTUS SHRIVEL'S OFFICE.——*It is an Up-stairs Apartment of Dark Oak.*

*—There is a large Window, from the ceiling to within three feet of the ground, occupying the back from the Back Right Corner to the Back Left Centre—and from the Back Right Corner to the Right Second Entrance there is another, similar, Window. Thin Green Curtains, hanging to Poles, so as to be easily drawn quite aside, cover the Windows.—Against the back Window a long Office-table (its Writing-materials, etc., upon it) is placed, with two Chairs near it.— Between the side Window and a long, high, Clerk's Desk (which is opposite to this side Window and stands parallel with it, and with its end toward us) there are two or three high Stools.— Near the Right Second Entrance there is a square Table —with a Writing Desk, a dimly burning Candle, Law-papers, etc., upon it, and an antique Chair and a Waste-paper Basket near it:—and against the Wainscot on the Left are two similar Chairs.—In the Back Left Corner, about four feet from the back, there is a short row of rather low Balusters, with a Handrail—behind which there is an opening in the Floor, showing that it is the Top of a Staircase which opens up into the Office, the Ceiling of which is low, and is of Oak, and has heavy Beams across it.—Three or four Hat-pegs, a large Map, a Sheet-Almanac, etc., are on the Walls.—The Office is somewhat gloomy.*

[*And here the Attorney,* SHRIVEL, *is discovered, writing, at the Table near the Right Second Entrance, and, as the Music dies away and someone's loud knock is heard at the Street Door below, he turns his head and watches the Stairs-top and Balusters till—*FELTON'S *head appears above the Handrail.*

*Felton.* [*stopping a moment on the Stairs—peep-*

*ing up over the Handrail into the Office, toward* SHRIVEL—*and, then, speaking in a friendly, jocular tone, though with a countenance somewhat grave*] Does—one, Augustus Shrivel, live here?

*Shrivel.* [*rising, and going to meet him*] 'Augustus Shrivel is my name, and . . . .'

*Felton.* [*stepping up on to the floor, and shaking hands with him and interrupting him*] 'Law is your vocation.'

*Shrivel.* [*laughing*] 'The rule of three does puzzle me, and—and . . . .' No no, that ain't it,—er . . . .

*Felton.* [*walking to the long Desk, and placing his Hat upon it and interrupting him again*] Yes yes, fire away! and '*Practice* drives you mad!'

*Shrivel.* [*shaking his head*] That ain't rhyme.

*Felton.* No, but it 's reason!—how are you, old boy? —busy, of course?

*Shrivel.* Well—er—yes, rather,—and, as you say, —of course! This business, you see, of . . . .

*Felton.* [*again interrupting him*] Heathcote's? yes!—it pleased me when I heard that George, directly Dad was limboed, had hurried here to ask you what he'd better do, and more than pleased me when I found you'd gammoned him to leave the case to you! I'd have been home a day or two before, old flick! to wish

you joy, but, blow me! if I heard a word about it till I arrived!—You mean to get the Squire off, of course?

*Shrivel.* We mean to *try*, of course—for I've my brother's help; and we shall have, besides, the best professional assistance that money can procure in London.

*Felton.* Ah!—Nothing like help—that's certain!—professional help, I mean!—but—er—you must do better at the Trial than you did, man, at the Hearing!—and then—your *time*'s so short.—Er—do you know, Shrivel, that *I* could help you more, perhaps, than all your great professionals put together?

*Shrivel.* You?

*Felton.* Yes,—er . . . . Is that staircase-door shut?—[*after going to the Balusters, and looking down over them, and returning*] Supposing—er—I could find—er . . . . well! a substitute?

*Shrivel.* [*regarding him a moment—and then looking on the ground, and shaking his head*] I don't quite understand.

*Felton.* [*after a long, meaning, mysterious smile, as though he would make* SHRIVEL *guess beforehand what he is about to say*] Some one—to appear upon the Trial—as Silvia—penitent—returned to Stebbington.

*Shrivel.* [*after a long, inquisitive, contemptuous stare, turning his head away*] Pshaw!

*Felton.* 'Pshaw?'—Pshaw! as you will, if you'll go in for it I'll manage it.

*Shrivel.* [*in a wavering, pondering, hesitating manner*] Nonsense, man! impossible!.... Besides, look at the risk that I should run!—And then—to find a girl, sufficiently resembling Silvia Heathcote, willing, and able too, to play her part *before* the Trial, *at* the Trial, and *afterwards*?.... And then, again—your plot itself supposes the possibility of Silvia being still alive—the very line of our defence!—No no, I think we can get Heathcote off without recourse to such a scheme as that—with self-respect too—professional self-respect I mean—and without risk.

*Felton.* You will *not* pull him through it, Shrivel—the universal feeling is that he is guilty,—and circumstances are against him.

*Shrivel.* [*still in a wavering tone*] Well—we'll do our best, and—if he's guilty—*ought* he to escape?—[*with a suddenly inquisitive look at* FELTON] Er—why are *you* anxious for his welfare?

*Felton.* I?—anxious for his welfare?—not I?—though, for the little that I care, one way or other, he may get off.

*Shrivel.* Then what's the motive in this scheme of yours?

*Felton.* [*mysteriously*] Money.

*Shrivel.* Money?

*Felton.* [*laying his hand impressively on* SHRIVEL'S *shoulder*] Money—for both of us.—Come!—listen, Shrivel. The carrying out of such a scheme is more than feasible,—it's easy—and its success quite certain.—I know a woman who—allowance made for change two years would bring about in personal appearance just at her time of life—two years, mind! of supposed care, poverty, and wearing passion—two years, say, during which she is supposed to have become a wife—resembles Heathcote's niece *so*—that, unless he's guilty, *he* could not *know* 't was not her.—She's miserably poor, and—I think—clever,—and to save a life—even a murderer's—providing she gets hold of Silvia's estate—she'll do as—as—as I direct.—*You*'ll run no risk whatever. A woman you don't know, though you half fancy you have seen her somewhere, visits you, early, on the morning of the Trial, and says she's Silvia Heathcote—will swear it, and is prepared to prove it. At first you seem to doubt her:—then—you believe her.—You tell her to keep herself quite quiet—unobserved—until—you call her into Court. "It's not your rule to let 'the prosecution' know the line of your defence—that's always useless—generally unwise. Since it's so near the Court-hour there's no good that she can do by noisily anticipating it,—leave the affair to you, etc."....Then—you go straight to Heathcote and tell him what you've heard—the truth,

nor more nor less. The prisoner's guilty, say,—he thinks you don't know that, and grasps at any thing to save himself, and feigns to hope that it is really Silvia returned. Suppose the prisoner innocent,—why—then he's but too willing to *believe* it's Silvia—comes into Court with courage—and behaves like one whose friends, through luck, or ingenuity, or perseverance, *have* found his so-called victim.

*Shrivel.* And then?

*Felton.* Why, anyhow, you've saved a man from hanging.

*Shrivel.* Supposing Silvia alive . . . . ?

*Felton.* A thing I doubt . . . .

*Shrivel.* Suppose it. Suppose her come back, here, to Stebbington, and able to prove clearly her identity?

*Felton.* Again, a thing I doubt—but what of that to you? The personator's floored—has lost her pay—and she's in 'limbo' for a little while, reflecting, man!—that's all!—The fraud's not yours—the perjury not yours! what have you to do with it?—And, look you here! it has n't been at making feasts with bits of orange-peel and broken china, or baking small mud pies, that you and I have played, Augustus, or I had, p'rhaps, thought twice, before proposing such a thing, and so your talk of self-respect, professional or non-professional, to me,

's all 'gammon!'—unless by self-respect you mean just taking *care* of self, by getting—money—safely.

*Shrivel.* [*after considering a moment or two*] And how will you be seen in this?

*Felton.* No how—I sha'n't be seen at all in it—even by you—we'll take good care of that;—neither must you be seen in it. There there, it's quite safe, man! Come, tell me! will you do it?

*Shrivel.* [*still hesitating*] Umph! About the money?

*Felton* You should be satisfied with—say—two hundred pounds.

*Shrivel.* And how, and when, to get it?

*Felton.* I'll give you my acceptance at—twelve months.... for—well, four hundred pounds,—take it to some fair money-lender and get—two.

*Shrivel.* How will you meet it?

*Felton* Oh, er—I might say 'as such things have been met by me before,' you know, but—er—in this case, 't will be with money got from the estate when the girl gets it.

*Shrivel.* *If* she gets it, say.

*Felton.* Bah! what's to hinder? Heathcote will only be too glad to help her to it.

*Shrivel.* Yes—perhaps—if he is guilty—and, after, glad, too, to ignore her strange supposed forgetfulness of her supposed own former life;—but if he's innocent and comes to think your lady an impostor . . .

*Felton.* He will not risk his neck by letting others know his thought, but help her imposition while he lives in hope of Silvia's return. Besides, *my* Silvia's married, now, and so—though posted up about his niece's former life, and knowing every nook and corner of the Manorhouse—will leave, at once, 'the place of her reproach and sorrow,' and that sort of thing, you know, and won't be near enough to him, I fancy, to be in danger of committing her sweet self,—and, then, I tell you, *we* shall not be seen in this, and if she breaks down when we've got our booty—who's to care?—why, even *she* won't care when she has pocketed her first year's revenue!—a 'spell' in jail for perjury, perhaps, if Silvia *should* turn up—the Heathcotes wouldn't press the charge of swindling—and she's set up for life!

*Shrivel.* [*after considering in silence awhile*] Umph!—I can't say I see . . . .

*Felton.* Your risk?

*Shrivel.* [*shaking his head*] I see none.

*Felton.* Then it is agreed?

*Shrivel.* [*hesitating again*] Er—no,—not so fast: —two hundred's not enough.—I undertake to manage,

at the last moment the prisoner and all engaged for his defence—you'll make a bargain with this woman, who'll have Silvia's fortune—that will suit *you* well, no doubt!—make it suit me. What is the most you'll give me?

*Felton.* What will satisfy you?

*Shrivel.* Double your offer.

*Felton.* Well—a bargain!—two bills—each for four hundred, say. Now....

*Shrivel.* [*interrupting him*] Stop!—as I understand it, once the arrangement made, there is no risk for either of us?

*Felton.* Exactly.

*Shrivel.* But what risk will you run in *making* the arrangement?

*Felton.* The risk you run yourself.

*Shrivel.* No more?

*Felton.* No more:—leave that to me.

*Shrivel.* A bargain, then!—Now, mark!—I undertake the work—no risk—and reckon your bills waste-paper until you have succeeded.—When you have succeeded I shall negotiate them—getting the full eight hundred pounds, or thereabout,—and you—*must* meet them.

*Felton.* [*with a cynical and* [illegible]*culating, cunning smile, aside, but in a tone intentionally loud enough for* SHRIVEL'S *ear*] I see!—so that, at worst—in case of failure—a candle will consume the only evidence that you've had aught to do with me.

*Shrivel.* Exactly.

*Felton.* [*looking toward the Table*] The stamps?

*Shrivel.* [*opening the Desk*] I have them here.

*Felton.* At once, then.

*Shrivel.* [*sitting down and writing*] At once,—and then it 's done with.

[SHRIVEL *draws out the Bills, and rises—and* FELTON *sits down, and signs them, while* SHRIVEL *looks on.*

*Felton.* [*as he finishes*] So!—[*glancing, as he rises, at the Back Window-curtains, through which a bright light is seen, while* SHRIVEL *takes the Papers and locks them up in the Desk*] Hullo!—what the deuce is that? [*as* SHRIVEL *puts out the Candle and leaves the Office in darkness (except from the glow through the Window-curtains) that they may better see what's going on outside*] That's right—'douse the glim!'

*Shrivel.* [*hastening toward the Window as* FELTON *draws the Window-curtain quite aside and so*

*discovers a great Fire raging, in the murky, grand remoteness*] Somebody getting smoked out, Robert Felton.

[*And outside, in the night gloom, at a little distance (as if upon the farther side of the contracted Street), the Ridge of an old House-roof, a Chimney and the tops of Gabled Attic-windows are seen a foot or two above the lower part of* SHRIVEL'S *Window. Above, and far beyond, the Roof-ridge, Chimney and old Gabled Attics, the Conflagration (seemingly of long-extending Farmhouse-buildings on an upland) is fearfully devouring for itself a passage, through the night, from Right to Left—reddening the Dorè-like, vast landscape, and illumining some objects while it brings out others (at various distances) in sharp, black outline, weird, away, between its glare and us and* SHRIVEL'S *Office.*

*From time to time, as awfully the Fire progresses, burning its way along (by reason of the farness with apparent slowness) the outlined skeletons of Farm-buildings, and of unignited Haystacks, trees, etc., are, in the bright Light, visible,—and now and then fresh outbursts of red Smoke and Flame, and myriads of Sparks, seem to go upwards to the heavens.*

*Felton.* Something more than smoke though, Shrivel !—eh ?

*Shrivel.* Yes.

*Felton.* Whose place, I wonder?

*Shrivel.* Heaven knows!—perhaps, Fordingham's?

*Felton.* Not it—it's five miles off, if it's an inch!

*Shrivel.* No?

*Felton.* I'd bet my head upon it!

*Shrivel* [*after a pause*] Umph!—well—perhaps.

*Felton.* No 'perhaps' about it!—[*turning and seizing his Hat from the Desk*] Here!—I'm off!

*Shrivel.* [*loudly and hastily—surprised at* FELTON'S *running away at such a moment*] Not to the fire?

*Felton.* No—just to find out where it is—that's all! —I shall be back in half-an-hour, with one more word to say to you!—[*as he hastens to the Balusters and down the Stairs*] You'll be here, I suppose?

*Shrivel.* [*gazing out of the Window at the Fire*] All right!

[*As* SHRIVEL *stands, leaning on the Table by the Back Window, looking out upon the Conflagration, and the Air of "Waggoners Whistle" is faintly heard again, we are transported to*

SCENE THE FIFTH.—*A* COUNTRY LANE—*illumined by the now unseen, still distant, Conflagration, with (at*

*the Front Left Grooves, and pointing off toward the Left) a rough, crook'd* SIGN-POST, *upon which is written, skillessly:* "TO ORTWELL ☞"

[*Here many of the Villagers who rush across from Right to Left exclaiming "Fire! Fire! Fire!" "Where is it?" "Fire!" "Whose place I wonder?" "Fire!" etc., are followed, shortly afterwards, by* FELTON, *who is followed by slow stragglers crying "Look!" "Good heavens!" "Oh! Is n't it dreadful!" "Dear, dear, dear!" and so forth,—and then the Scene is changed to*

SCENE THE SIXTH.—*The bright Interior of the* KITCHEN (POLL'S) *at 'Felton Lodge', again.*

*Polly.* [*singing, as she enters, to the Air of "The Jolly Young Waterman."*]

Oh! have you ne'er heard of my handsome young yeoman, then—
  Honest as daylight and deep as the night—
Willing at labour, and, 'gainst any foeman, then,
  Fresh for home, freedom, or woman, to fight?
He loves so true and pities so readily—
  Goes to his purpose so strong and so steadily—
And puts his arm round one with such a kind air—
And keeps it so cozily, coaxingly, there—
That one cannot help feeling his kisses are fair!

How slyly he laughs when I say I don't care for him—
  "Let us then kiss till you do, Dear!" he cries!
All my tongue saucily hints of despair for him
  'S answered with—"Lizzy! let's look at your eyes!"

He's in the right of it! Oh! the delight of it!
Having a love-mate whose faith's in the bright of it!
Who looks through one's eyes to one's heart for his share
Of the fun and affection of life lurking there,
And will not take—'Nay!'—from the lass he knows fair!

[*jumping, and clapping her hands with joyful excitement, as, after running to the Open Door and looking out awhile, she turns into the Kitchen again*] It's him! it's him! He's coming! he's coming!! Oh! he's coming!!! What shall I do? [*running about the Kitchen*] Where's my glass, I wonder? where's my looking-glass? [*finding a bit of broken Looking-glass on the Dresser—standing it up against a Jug—and stooping to examine her face in it*] Ah!—[*smoothing down her hair with her hands and admiring herself*] that'll do! [*arranging her Skirt—looking over her shoulder to see if it hangs right—and then, as she turns and sees* HARRY STUKELY *at the Door, rushing, with a little, laughing shriek, into his arms*] Harry!!!

*Stukely.* [*as* POLLY, *still held in his arms, turns her head back over her shoulder again, as if yet anxious about the appearance of her dress*] Why, Polly!—what's the matter, girl? Ain't your gown quite the thing? [*looking lovingly down in her face*] There, there! it's nice enough for Harry!

*Polly.* [*putting her face up closer to his*] Is it?

*Stukely.* [*smiling archly at her*] 'Is it?' Yes, of course it is.

*Polly.* [*putting up her face still closer to his*] Er....

*Stukely.* [*looking at her tantalizingly*] Well—what is it?—Why, you want me to kiss you, you puss!

*Polly.* [*drawing her head back, pettishly*] No I don't.

*Stukely.* Well—what *do* you want?

*Polly.* [*with a look of frank fun*] Why, I want you to want to.

*Stukely.* Then I won't want to—I'll [*kissing her*] do it.

*Polly.* [*raising her eyes ecstatically*] Oh! that's delightful?

*Stukely.* Ha, ha, ha!—well, it ain't unpleasant—let's try it again.

*Polly.* [*offering him her lips*] With all my heart!

*Stukely.* [*kissing her fondly*] Polly! Polly! you're the 'rummest' girl I ever knew!—But, there! you like strong courting and you're too honest to pretend you don't, and that's all about it!

*Polly.* 'Strong!' d'ye' call that strong?—well, I never! You should 'a' seen Caleb Clod a-courtin' me two years ago! Why, he used to stretch out his arms

[*stretching out her own arms to show him how*] so—and look at me .... Oh, Gemini! such looks! And then he used to faint away, and cry, and go without victuals for a month ....

*Stukely.* [*interrupting her archly*] Often?

*Polly.* [*without heeding his query, and placing a small Table and two Chairs in the middle of the Kitchen*] But, there, sit down and make yourself comfortable:—[*as* STUKELY *sits down at the side of the Table, and she runs out through the Kitchen-door*] back in a moment! [*returning with a Jug of Ale in her hand, and a Tablecloth on her arm and putting the Ale on the Dresser and the Tablecloth over the Table*] Now—[*placing, with amusing rapidity, the Ale, a Drinking-horn, some Bread and Cheese and a Knife and Fork upon the Table*] there's all I've got, and so you 'll have to make the best of it.

*Stukely.* [*pouring out a draught of Ale, and cutting himself some Bread and Cheese*] Ah—bread and cheese and kisses—thank you, Polly.

*Polly.* [*seating herself at the back of the Table—leaning with her arms upon it—and regarding him with a happy countenance*] Well—and how have you been getting on down at Wailingdale?—come! tell us a lot, ye' know!

*Stukely.* O! pretty well!—plenty o' work down there, and . . . .

*Polly.* [*interrupting him*] Well, that's a good thing—is plenty o' work—for a young man that's a-goin' to get—er—I mean for careful persons that's looking forward to the future.

*Stukely.* [*dryly*] E...yes.

*Polly.* And how are your neighbours a-gitting on? What sort o' people 's them that you wrote to me about—the schoolmaster and his wife, and their sister that 's single, ye' know?

*Stukely.* O! nice sort of people,—[*looking slyly at her*] especially the sister that 's single.

*Polly.* [*tossing her head scornfully*] Oh! of course!

*Stukely.* There, don't be angry, Polly—she's not near as nice as yourself, and if you were to see her you 'd find her not half so good-looking, I know:—let's have another kiss. [*after he has wiped his mouth and they have kissed across the Table*] By-the-bye, I 've—er—a little commission to attend to for her.

*Polly.* The single one?

*Stukely.* [*carelessly, and, seemingly, with his attention almost entirely engaged again by the Bread and Cheese*] No no—the married one.—She used—er—to live here, once—in Stebbington—in service, perhaps.

—She knew about the Heathcotes and their troubles, and—er—knowing that I thought of coming into Stebbington, on my way back, this journey, she asked me to enquire how the folks were getting on here—especially the Heathcotes .... [*looking up at* POLLY, *who, in her silence is seeming very grave*] Hullo! why, what's the matter, Polly? ain't you well?

*Polly.* Yes—thank you, Harry,—but—about the Heathcotes—er—have you heard nothing?

*Stukely.* [*looking at her with earnest curiosity*] I? —no;—how should I? I came straight here;—as yet, I have n't spoken to any one in Stebbington but you.

*Polly.* [*sadly*] The Squire's in prison.

*Stukely.* [*surprised*] 'In prison!'—what for?—not—er—that old business?

*Polly.* Yes.

*Stukely.* [*leaning back in his Chair and looking thoughtfully upon the ground*] Dear dear!—why, that's sad news indeed!—The charge, of course, is .... ?

*Polly.* Murder.

*Stukely.* [*after a pause*] When did this happen?

*Polly.* Only a day or two ago—a week or more—a few days—something—I do n't know,—he's had his what d'ye' call—his ....

*Stukely.* 'Hearing?'

*Polly.* Yes, oh, yes! and all the people say it'll go very hard with him, and the trials come on next week, and he'll very likely be tried next Monday, and .... Dear, dear, dear! poor Bertha Blackbourne, that's so good to every body,'ll break her heart! yes, that she will, poor girl!

*Stukely.*] *getting quite close to the Table, with his legs under it—leaning over toward* POLLY—*and taking one of her hands while she continues crying and covering her face (her elbow on the Table) with the other*] But about the evidence, Polly? what evidence have they against him?

*Polly.* Why, don't you know?—[*recollecting herself*] O! of course, you don't, though! how stupid I am!—They found the clothes, you see.

*Stukely.* What clothes?

*Polly.* Silvia's, of course.

*Stukely.* 'Silvia's!'—found Silvia's clothes?—what clothes?—where?

*Polly.* A straw hat with a ribbon as had been, once, blue—a grey shawl, and—er—some other things;—they found 'em in diggin' up the ground in the corner o' Squire Heathcote's meadow, aside of Old Beech Lane—by Felton's five-bar gate, you know—and 'Flor,'

one of the girls at Heathcote's, swears to 'em as Silvia's.

*Stukely.* [*springing up, and dashing the Table to the ground through the suddenness of his movement, and exclaiming with vehemence, as* POLLY, *almost thrown from her Chair, shrieks in surprise*] And I say she swears a lie! [*walking about in continued excitement as* POLLY *runs to the Door and closes it*] *Where*'s my hat? where's my hat? give me my *hat*, Polly!

*Polly.* [*frightened still, but retaining her presence of mind, and running to him and placing one hand on each of his shoulders, and looking at him coaxingly*] Yes, Harry, yes! but—er—stop a bit! you 've frightened me! Oh! you *have* frightened me!—You would n't leave me *so*? What is it? Tell me—what is it? What 's the matter?

*Stukely.* [*as a sudden thought seems to strike him, and in a deep tone of mingled sternness and alarm*] Where was Felton when this discovery was made?

*Polly.* I do n't know,—not in Stebbington.

*Stukely.* Where is he now?

*Polly.* I do n't know—not in Stebbington, I think, —though he was here an hour ago.

*Stukely.* [*fiercely*] At all events, he has been here since this discovery?

*Polly.* Of course! of course!—but, Harry! don't look so!—you frighten me!

*Stukely.* And has n't contradicted this girl's statement?

*Polly.* [*with sudden calmness, and a mixture of sternness and curiosity in her tone and look*] *Could* he?—*should* he?

[STUKELY *does not answer; and, for some moments, they stand apart, each staring on the ground, apparently absorbed in thought.*

*Stukely.* [*recollecting himself, and going to her, and putting his hand kindly on her shoulder*] Polly —I thought just now that I could show *at once* that Flora is mistaken about those clothes,—but—when I come to think of it—since Felton has been silent, I'm not so sure that I can do so. For all that, I must go again, lass—forthwith, too. Felton can prove what I can prove about the girl's mistake, and why has he been silent?—He has some motive,—I must see Heathcote's lawyers,—have you heard their names?

*Polly.* Shrivel is his attorney.

*Stukely.* [*starting*] 'Shrivel!' 'Shrivel!' Ah?— But—I—I can't see Shrivel, Polly—he's a villain! I

am sure of it! and Felton's friend! and—Felton has been doing—for some reason I can't fathom—as I've said——wrong, in this affair!—and Shrivel would protect him, I feel sure, even if, in doing it, he had to make the evidence that I could give in Heathcote's favour valueless!—[*after a pause*] But—look you—for aught that Felton knows I might be dead—he has n't seen me since I left his service—I have n't been in Stebbington, you know, till now—and, let me see! it would n't, perhaps, be wise to let him be aware that I am near until I've had the counsel of some good and clever man,—and—so—I'm off, at all events!—I'll see George Heathcote, if I can, and no one else, if I can help it, here—unless he wishes it!—I'll tell George all I know and think, and then—if George thinks fit—get back to Wailingdale and talk with Morris Mansfield over it—he's a good man, and wise, and my firm friend, and he'll advise me for the best,—and you shall see me again, Polly—well—anyhow within a day or two!—So vow that *you* 'll let no one know you've seen me and let me say 'good-bye.'—[*seeing* POLLY *sad*] Don't be down-hearted, Polly!—what's the matter?

*Polly.* [*wiping tears from her eyes*] Well—you see—you've been here such a little while,—and then—you're so excited, and—and [*wiping her eyes again*] everything seems so gloomy like.

*Stukely.* Well—so it does, lass, so it does, but—never mind! a brighter day to-morrow! Next time I come to see you I'll not run away again so soon, I promise you.

*Polly.* [*looking at him piteously*] Won't you, Harry?

*Stukely.* [*encouragingly*] No, that I won't! And—come now! think over what I've said and should it turn out that I've been seen as I stole round to you—if people question you—ask 'Who was that?' and so on—just laugh at them,—tell them they're inquisitive,—'Wouldn't you like to know?' say—and all like that—and leave them in the dark.

*Polly.* [*quietly*] O, I shall manage it!

*Stukely.* Of course, you will!—Besides, as I have told you, I shall see no one here but Master George, if I can help it.—[*kissing her*] There! Good-bye, Polly, dear! Good-bye!

[*And, as the Music of "Though Sweet the Hour" commences,* STUKELY *hastens out, and* POLLY, *at the door, stands gravely looking after him until—the Curtain falls again.—And then to weird, low, mournful Music comes the last Act—*

## ACT THE FIFTH.

SCENE THE FIRST.—*A* POPLAR GROVE, *near* MORRIS MANSFIELD'S *Cottage, at Wailingdale, in Leicestershire.—The place has an imposing appearance.—But little of the Trees, except the lower portions of their Stems, is seen, and, right and left, and at the back; the Scene seems almost to consist of a vast group of Timber-columns, stretching away in grand perspective.—The ground is Grass-grown.—It is Evening and late. There is no sun-or-summer-colour in the remaining light, which is cold, and slightly tinged with Crimson,—and there's a gentle sound of Wind.*

[*As the Curtain rises* MORRIS MANSFIELD *is discovered, gravely, and slowly, with folded arms and bowed head, crossing and recrossing the Scene, as though wandering among the Trees in anxious thought.*

*Stukely.* [*after appearing at the Right Second Entrance—seeing* MORRIS *coming up from the Back Centre—approaching him in silence—shaking hands with him—and then turning and walking with him toward the front*] Your sister Lil was right, then,

Mansfield. She was quite sure, she, said, that I should find you not far off. I thought to see you at your cottage, and, just now, called there. I'm sorry for the news I'm told on getting back here into Wailingdale —that Mrs. Mansfield has been suddenly and sadly ill.

*Mansfield.* It's like the news you 'll tell us, Stukely —sad. She's better, though, thank heaven!

*Stukely.* [*after regarding him for some time with surprise and curiosity*] What can you know about the news that I shall tell you, Mansfield?—[*finding* MANSFIELD *does not answer*] What, may I ask, has been the matter with your wife?

*Mansfield.* She heard sad news of some of her relations, and, afterwards, was—startled, and excited.— What is the news from Stebbington?

[*A pause.*

*Stukely.* [*looking on the ground seriously and musingly*] Why did you say that I'd sad news to tell you?

*Mansfield.* [*in a similar tone, and without looking at* STUKELY] Nay, what's the news from Stebbington, friend Stukely? *I*'ll answer afterwards.

*Stukely.* Well—in the first place—the family that Mrs. Mansfield bade me ask about particularly—is in great trouble:—Heathcote, the Squire,'s in prison—

*Mansfield.* [*nodding his head, and speaking as if to himself*] Yes.

*Stukely.* 'Yes!'—*You* know this?

*Mansfield.* [*nodding*] Go on.

*Stukely.* For—murder.

*Mansfield.* Yes?—then?

*Stukely.* It's *all* the news—there,—they talk of nothing else.

*Mansfield.* I know, I know—and in the second place—?

*Stukely.* [*slowly, ponderingly, and looking on the ground*] I'm interested—personally—importantly—and unexpectedly—in his defence.

*Mansfield.* [*in surprise—looking up at him*] You?

*Stukely.* [*with his eyes still cast upon the ground*] I.

*Mansfield.* Umph!—and how so?

*Stukely.* They'll hang him, *if* they hang him, on the evidence of circumstances. The strength or weakness of the circumstances against him is affected by the testimony of one of his own servant-girls. The girl declares that certain clothes, buried close by, there,

and turned up lately by some labourers, were Silvia Heathcote's about the time that she was missed:—and I know well that they were not.

*Mansfield.* [*quickly, loudly, and (with intense anxiety) seizing* STUKELY'S *hand*] Stukely!—can this be true? Say it again, man! say it again! Tell me it is 'nt fancy! tell me you are sure!

*Stukely.* [*calmly*] It is not fancy—I know it, friend, as well and surely as I know that I'm alive and talking to you now.

*Mansfield.* [*letting go his hand*] Away then! why stay here? Why are you here at all?

*Stukely.* Because George Heathcote wished me to be anywhere away from Stebbington.

*Mansfield.* [*looking at him with amazement*] 'Away from Stebbington!'—and you could save his father? —'Away from Stebbington!'—why . . . .

*Stukely.* [*interrupting him*] Why are *you* so excited about this? your look . . . .

*Mansfield.* [*also interrupting, and still with great excitement*] Nay, tell me more first! tell me more first, Stukely!—Why did George Heathcote wish you to leave Stebbington?

*Stukely.* Well, then, be calm—and listen to me.—There is one, Felton—Squire Fel . . . .

*Mansfield.* [*interrupting him again, and with increased excitement*] 'Felton!'

*Stukely.* [*after pausing and looking fixedly at* MANSFIELD] Nay—what's the matter, Morris? you 're hardly like yourself, this evening.

*Mansfield.* [*confused, but trying to control himself*] Yes? well?—go on!

*Stukely.* [*after a pause*] This Felton, then, at Stebbington, with whom I lived some time ago—as—I can hardly tell you what, for, although called his 'butler,' I worked at almost any thing there was to do—knows, what I know, that the girl's mistaken—yet, for some reason, although he knows the nature of the evidence against poor Heathcote, has been silent.—If *he*'d corroborate the evidence which I *shall* give, the Squire, though perhaps not cleared, would certainly be saved:—but that's just what I, after his silence, think he would *not* do if he could help it. And then, you see, with reference to Shrivel, the Squire's attorney—although George Heathcote—of late, at all events—has had some faith in him, *I*—*never* had,—and, now, George, too, mistrusts him, and information I have given George and Parson Pomfret—considered by them in connection with the known close fellowship between Shrivel and the mysteriously-silent Felton, and Shrivel's glibly-professed certainty of getting Heathcote off, without apparently sufficient reason for such confidence, as though he

wished to lull the doomed man into a treacherous feeling of security — has made them, George and Pomfret, think, with me, Shrivel's intentions for the most part doubtful, and, at all events, his inclination to rebut, destroy, or weaken, by any means, if forewarned, all evidence which Felton could have given and has not cared to give—quite certain,—and so they think, too, that, for the moment, it had better be unknown to Shrivel that some one's *really* ready to damage more than he, perhaps, *could*, if he were willing, that portion of the evidence 'gainst Heathcote which is most serious, and that I'd better be invisible—unthought of.—I don't myself quite see how we're to tell the Counsel who're engaged for Heathcote all we wish to tell and not tell his attorney, Shrivel, Felton's friend; but George and Pomfret think that they can manage it. They 'll let the Counsel know, I fancy, at the last moment, and take Felton and the Attorney by surprise. These, neither of them, know where I am now, and I've contrived to learn that should they, either of them, think of me (though Shrivel is not like to do so) they 'll think of me as one not heard of since he lived in Stebbington.—I've *promised*, that, until three days have passed, I'll tell to *none—why* I so well know that the girl's mistaken.

*Mansfield.* [*looking on the ground, lost in thought*] He is a devil,—Silvia's right—there is some hellish plot in this.

*Stukely.* [*starting slightly and looking at him with open-eyed wonder*] 'Plot!' 'Silvia!'—*What* plot, what *Silvia* do you talk about?

*Mansfield.* [*confusedly*] 'Silvia!'—did I say 'Silvia?'—I see!—I shall now think of nought but 'Silvia.' I meant 'Susan,'—Susan—my wife—yes.

*Stukely.* [*earnestly*] Well, but what 'plot?'—and who's a 'devil?'

*Mansfield.* [*with gloomy fierceness, and without looking at* STUKELY] Felton.

*Stukely.* 'Felton!'—but—why do *you* say so?

*Mansfield.* [*turning to him, after a pause*] Now it's your turn to listen:—Felton has been here.

*Stukely.* He! 'Here!' What for?

*Mansfield.* [*after looking at him for some time as though he hardly expected that what he was about to communicate would be believed*] To get my wife to personate this Silvia Heathcote at the trial, and get the Squire off.

*Stukely.* [*as though he can scarcely believe his ears*] *What?*

*Mansfield.* [*after a pause*] The Squire to get his life—she the estate, less, some allowance to be made for some one—something—er—I can hardly tell you what

is the arrangement—but there's to be some paper signed . . . .

*Stukely.* [*interrupting him*] 'There *is* to be?'—but stop! I don't quite understand you, Mansfield!—you've not agreed to this? No! pshaw! what am I thinking of?

*Mansfield.* I'm telling you what startled and excited her . . . . You know that, once, she lived at Stebbington?

*Stukely.* Yes.

*Mansfield.* Knew Heathcote, and this Felton?

*Stukely.* Yes—*I* see?

*Mansfield.* He has been here, disguised.

*Stukely.* [*eagerly*] Who?

*Mansfield.* Felton.

*Stukely.* [*amazed*] When?

*Mansfield.* To-day.

*Stukely.* Ah?

*Mansfield.* She has seen him here before, and recently, and *not* disguised—and, now, she recognized him *under* his disguise,—not *quite*, at first, but half suspected who he was when he began to talk, and, being on her guard, controlled her feelings when he talked of Heathcote and told her of his plan to take her from

her poverty and save the man from hanging.—He gives a host of reasons for *his* interest in the matter, which, if she did not know his character, and know how he hates Heathcote, would be specious.

*Stukely.* Does *he* know *her* ?

*Mansfield.* This Felton? know my wife?—I hardly think so, now,—he did not know her when she lived in Stebbington as well as she knew him, and she's much altered now,—much altered even since *I've* known her.

*Stukely.* Is she, then, *like* this 'Silvia!'

*Mansfield.* Well, I suppose *he thinks* so,—don't *you* know?

*Stukely.* I never saw Miss Heathcote, that I'm aware of:—but—what think you, then,'s his motive in all this?

*Mansfield.* We don't know what to think;—we've thought it might be money,—we to be guilty tools—and *victims* perhaps—from whom he would extort the greater portion of the income from the estate—but, *now*, after what you have told, she'll think, with us, that he means something worse.—At all events, she begged time to consider—to consult with me—and he's to see her here again to-night.

*Stukely.* And how have you advised her?

*Mansfield.* We should have been in Stebbington ere now, friend Stukely, could we have got there:—we

*must* wait till to-morrow-morning for the coach, you know. When she remembers she will scarce reach Stebbington before the trial she seems beside herself, and what she'll feel when she hears what you've told me about these clothes, and Felton's silence, I hardly dare to contemplate.

*Stukely.* And yet I don't quite understand . . . .

*Mansfield.* [*interrupting him*] Of course, you do not understand me!—but, there! we've much to tell you!—Come! come along, and see her! we can't talk here!—[*pointing off through the Right Second Entrance*] There's some one coming! look!

[STUKELY *looks in the direction indicated by* MANSFIELD *and, then, he and* MANSFIELD *leave the Scene by the Left Upper Entrance—and a long pause ensues.—Then—*FELTON *appears at the Right Second Entrance, dressed in a large black Travelling-cloak which reaches below his knees.—He wears black Gaiters and Shoes with silver Buckles. His Cloak, which has an ample Cape, is clasped across his breast, but at the neck is left unfastened. He has a Shirt-Frill and white Neck-Cloth, and a broad-brimmed Hat which is half clerical half lawyer-like. He wears a false Beard (short, black, and thick) which covers the lower part of his face, and false Eyebrows, long, and black, and straight, and somewhat large. The lines of his face, too, seem altered, but not enough to quite deceive a sharp observer.*

*Felton.* [*gazing off after* STUKELY *and* MANSFIELD] Umph!—one looks like her husband;—and the other —some one he has met with, perhaps.—[*glancing at his watch*] How to beguile the time?—[*seems to remember something*] yes,—*that* 'll do.

[*He crosses the Scene, and leaves it, rather hastily, and as if upon some now-just-recollected business, by the Left Second Entrance—the 'weird, low, mournful' Music introducing—*

SCENE THE SECOND.—MANSFIELD'S *Poor and Lonely* COTTAGE *again.—The Scene is dark. There is a faint light, as of a Candle, seen through the Cottage Window, and Lights are also seen in all the little Windows of the distant, lowly Cottages upon the Valley's sides—are seen, too, through all the Windows in the side of the Long Factory:—and the tall Furnace-chimney and the Rustic-Church-spire stand clear out in black, sharp outline, against a dull, red glare immediately behind them.*

[*And* FELTON—*cautiously appearing at the Left Second Entrance—crosses, stealthily, to* MANSFIELD'S *Cottage-window—listens a moment—retreats hastily—and conceals himself behind the Trees at the Right Second Entrance.*

*Then, there is a pause.*

*Then,* STUKELY *and* MANSFIELD *come out of the Cottage and leave the Scene by the Back Left Corner.*

*Then, another pause.*

*And, then,* FELTON *comes out from his hiding-place.*

*Felton.* [*looking at the Cottage*] Now—Madam—you are there alone, I fancy.—You little thought, when speaking of me, here, in Wailingdale, as 'some' . . . . umph! . . . . 'swindling rascal,' that I so soon should have you in my service and my clutches.—How readily and naughtily you entered my good trap! Well well—the d - - - l forgive you—you are very poor!—[*after a pause*] Yes—you will do it:—for had your notions been too nice to suit my purpose you would have started from me, in a fright, at the first words of my proposal—and I, so far as you're concerned, should have been—missing,—and—no harm would have been done.—Money 's a great temptation to you, I've no doubt, and when I've floored you, and, through your tumble, find myself upon my legs—why, I may think it wise and good, perhaps, anonymously to remit you some,—and if I had n't learned that you had been so—*bold*, when speaking of me, as to call me 'some swindling rascal'—well! it *might* have made me cry to think you would n't get what you'd sell

soul and body for—that you would only get a quiet life, for some brief space, in jail, perhaps, instead. But, come, my Beauty! let 's get our business settled.

[*Then going to the Cottage-door he strikes it three times, pausing an instant between each faint stroke.*

*And* MRS. MANSFIELD, *opening the Door, looks out upon the gloom—sees him—descends the Steps (closing the Door deliberately after her)—comes forward—and, (hastily concealing a long Dagger's point, which for the moment's seen projecting, glittering, below her Waistband) stops near him, in firm, dignified, expectant silence.*

*Felton.* Well?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*in a cold and stately manner*] I am here.

*Felton.* [*smilingly*] It needs not, my sweet creature, better eyes than *mine* to see that, even in this gloom!

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*with a little dryness added to her former tone*] Call me 'Madam'—I am married, and —Charles Heathcote's heiress.

*Felton.* [*with a broad grin*] Ah, I forgot!—beg pardon! .... Er—well!—you have consulted with your husband?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I have.

*Felton.* And . . . . ?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*significantly*] I am Silvia Heathcote.

*Felton.* Bravo! that 's business-like!—And you 've no fear?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Of what?

*Felton.* Of some one 's saying you're *not* Silvia Heathcote?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Who will—*can*—say so? *Would* Squire Heathcote?

*Felton.* I *think* not.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*aside*] And little think that you might *swear* it. [*to* FELTON] I'll so manage that he *shall not*,—and if *he* does not *who* will dare it?

*Felton.* [*aside, with a grin*] The *prosecuting Counsel*, my sweet creature! [*to her*] No one—you are right.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* And now—about this money that you tell me I'm to pay to you as a reserve you 'll in *some* way, convey to Silvia Heathcote, for her support should she be found, hereafter, living—sworn out of her inheritance?

*Felton.* [*turning, for an instant, partly round from her, in searching for a Document*] The Agreement's

*pausing, and considering, awhile*] Umph!—I wonder whether, to be tender-conscienced, people must be timid? —*She*'s not timid.—I fancied I saw something like a dagger-point glittering below her waistband, and, after signing, lifting up my head a little, I saw, I thought, the shadow of a scowl of hate pass quickly from her countenance.—Pshaw! the woman's scissors, perhaps! —and—as for the scowl—why—*only* fancy!—*I* am too timid—tender-conscienced—[*with a diabolical grin*] I always was a little so.—No no, she thinks *I* want *some* money for *my*self, and 's not at all unwilling to secure *her*self the lion's share,—and so she's duped!—Now to get rid of this disguise and back to Stebbington, by some cross route, before them!—[*after considering further*] Then—the Prosecution gets, at the last moment, [*holding out the Agreement and looking at it*] *this* precious document, and is informed that the Defence has bribed some beauty to personate Miss Heathcote and get the Squire off. [*considering again*] *That*—with some odds and ends of information anent this child, etc—about which she is going, she imagines, to 'keep dark'—as hints for cross-examinations of the naughty, haughty Substitute—who thinks, perhaps, by-the-bye, to get the estate and then ignore me—[*nodding his head in a cunning, self-satisfied manner*] the imposture is unveiled—Heathcote's suspected as its author, or an abettor—his case is black as h - - l, and he—*must*

hang.—[*with another low chuckle*] Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!—Oh, Madam Mansfield! oh, Augustus Shrivel! how deeply, although silently, you'll curse your good friend Felton! But—[*with fierce excitement, though afraid to vent it loudly*] Bertha! and Blackbourne's money!—bah! I'd sell *good* folk now for either, and *these*—are but—a perjurer, a swindler and a—[*as he goes off by the Right Second Entrance*]—well, well! —we won't call names!—a man ill-starred enough to have killed his ward!

[*Some little time elapses after* FELTON *has gone, and then in grave haste* MANSFIELD *enters at the Back Left Corner, and, going straightway to the Cottage, knocks gently at the Door.*

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*holding up her finger when (having opened the Door) she sees him*] Hush! [*stepping out from the Cottage—quietly closing the Door after her—descending the Door-steps—kissing him—and walking (followed by him) a few paces toward the Front*] we'll talk out here! the child is restless!—besides, I want the air!

*Mansfield.* [*eagerly*] You 've seen him?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*calmly*] Yes.

*Mansfield.* I saw him but just now, walking fast away toward the shrubbery.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Ah?

*Mansfield.* What has passed?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* We've signed the Agreement.

*Mansfield.* You have?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* It *seemingly* binds both to secrecy, but, *in fact*, neither.

*Mansfield.* How so?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* The villain signed it with the name of 'Mortimer':—what do you make of that?

*Mansfield.* [*when he has reflected a moment*] This—it has no one's signature but yours.—You know no Mortimer and cannot say that Felton is the signer, having suffered him to sign it 'Mortimer,' unless you say you did not know him,—and you would n't tell the lie even if 't would suit with your design to have not known him, and it will not.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* So far, you view the case as I do.

*Mansfield.* [*looking at her in amazement*] Why did you sign it, then?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Because I was resolved to go all lengths my conscience would approve with this arch villain, that I and mine might know him thoroughly, and, by exposing to the world his plots against us, render them, for the future, or impossible or fruitless.—I've told you, from the first, he hates my much-wronged

uncle and does not mean to aid him. Think, too, of what, now, Stukely tells us of his silence about the clothes—need we further proof? And why should I *not* sign it?—as I said just now, it really involves no one, and binds neither of us, though he is not aware of that. Then—what have I signed?—in favour of myself, a truthful, legal document, purporting to be mine, with my own signature!

*Mansfield.* [*quickly and anxiously*] *What* signature?—*how* did you sign it!

*Mrs. Mansfield.* As it *should* be signed—"S. Mansfield."

*Mansfield.* Thank heaven! I thought the matter over as I came along, and feared that you'd forget and sign it, "Susan."—He made no remark about it?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* None. But, as you suggested, he meant this document to have one *real* signature—my own,—and *only* one. What was his motive?

*Mansfield.* [*after pondering in silence*] Felton dare not produce it or present it anywhere, at anytime, for any purpose—there *is* no *Mortimer* that *could*—and yet—it's *to be used.*—I cannot understand.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Well—we'll be thankful that it is not what he thinks it is, and pray we may be soon and safe in Stebbington.—[*drawing herself up in a digni-*

*fied and determined manner*] Now, Morris, I, of age, must, with what little energy it has pleased heaven to bless me, think only of my much-wronged uncle's safety, [*wiping, furtively, a tear from her eye*] and seek to remedy, in part, the evil I have done him.—The money . . . . ?

*Mansfield.* Stukely has obtained it.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* And our places . . . . ?

*Mansfield.* Are booked.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Stukely, of course, goes with us?

*Mansfield.* Yes,—till within a mile of Ortwell.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Umph !—I see.

[*And, silently and seriously both remain awhile ground-gazing.*

*Then, gradually, the Scene becomes quite dark—making the far Lights in the Windows of the Factory and Cottages, away in the enchanting distance, appear brighter—and the subdued, slow, holy Music of the "Ave Santissima" is heard.*

*Then,* MRS. MANSFIELD *lovingly takes* MANSFIELD'S *hand and leads him slowly to the Seat beneath the Cottage-window, where they kneel to pray,—and the Scene, gently changing, brightens into—*

SCENE THE THIRD.—*A* COUNTRY LANE.—*It is represented before the Front Grooves, and, on the Left, pointing off to the Left, there is a* SIGN-POST *on which is written—"* ☞ *TO ORTWELL."*

[*When the "Ave Santissima" has quite died away, and the Strains of a Medley consisting of snatches from "Waggoners Whistle," "Though Sweet the Hour," "Awake, my love," "Alice Gray," "Begone, dull Care," "The Last Rose of Summer," "A Frog he would a-wooing go," "Ye Banks and Braes," "Pray, Goody, please to moderate," etc., are becoming heard—from time to time, foot-passengers, grave or gay according to the Medley's variations, pass from Right to Left until the Music changes to the 'weird, low, mournful' once again—the Scene to*

SCENE THE FOURTH.—*The Grand* INTERIOR, *thronged,* OF THE SUPREME COURT, *in the Town of Ortwell. It is the great hall of an ancient Gothic Castle, with fittings, ornaments, and furniture comparatively modern. The colours of the roof, walls, drapings and costumes (Judges wigged and red-and-ermine-robed—wigged Counsel in black gowns—Grey-beards who might be seated by our love in old arm-chairs to read the old, old Book in scenic thoughts of dear Rob Burns' Cotter's Nights on eves of Sabbaths in old Scotia—smart Swains and England's Country-girls in village-finery—and silken-robed, fair Ladies, ornamenting jewelry and feathers, and portly Gentlemen, and prim Officials, with hundreds of those strange ones of Christ's poor who make 'the multitude') are grouped in Rembrandt-like broad masses of ineffably bright light and deep unsearchable soft shadow, and o'er the groupings of gay colours and grave people, one*

*perceives, the Light is from the Roof (not perpendicularly but obliquely) and shoots down from us toward the back from Left to Right, leaving the Persons at the Front Grooves visible distinctly, but in mellow shade.—There's at the Back Right Corner a low, Gothic Door, and at the Back Left Corner such another Door, and, between them, stretching right across the Back, at a considerable elevation, a Platform on which are seen three Judges, at their Desks and facing us.—At the Left end of the Platform (in front of it) the Crier's Box. Before the centre Judge's Desk, and underneath it, the Judge's Clerk's Desk. Before the Clerk's Desk a narrow, open Passage, running parallel to the Platform, and before the Passage, and parallel to it, a long Table for Barristers, etc., with Seats upon each side.—Before the Barristers' Table, and parallel again to it, several rows of Seats whose occupants sit with their faces all turned from us toward the back—toward the Judges. Opposite the Back Right Centre, a little before the Platform and on a level with it, a Witness-box. Opposite the Back Left Centre, a little before the Platform and on a level with it, a Prisoner's Dock, placed endwise to the Platform, so that the Prisoner looks across the Scene from Left to Right.—From the Right Upper Entrance to the Right Second Entrance an Elevated Enclosure with Seats for Jurymen. On the right side of the Scene, supported by Pillars, there is a Gallery which winds round a little toward the Back Centre, over the Platform, and on the Left side of the Scene, another similar Gallery. —The Wall at the back of the Seats of the Judges is, to a height of eight feet above the Platform, wainscoted. Against the Wall, above the Wainscoting and in the Centre, there is the Royal Ensign, and, on each side of the Ensign, a narrow, Gothic, painted, Lattice-Window.*

[*On the Platform is seen, besides the three Judges in Wigs and Gowns,* SIR JOHN BLACKBOURNE, *sitting in a Chair near the Judge at the Right Centre. —The Clerk is at his Desk. The Seats on each side of the long Table are filled by Barristers in wigs and gowns, Attorneys, Witnesses, etc. The rows of seats between us and the Table of the Barristers, etc., are filled by people (as before-mentioned with their backs toward us and their faces toward the Judges) in costumes of lively-coloured manifold descriptions. —The Prisoner in the Dock is*—ADAM HEATHCOTE *(not strikingly despondent in appearance, but with very restless eyes, and great anxiety of manner),— and at the far end of the Prisoner's Dock, and close behind it, there are Soldiers ranged and Constables and a grim Turnkey.*

*On the two Seats of the Enclosure for the Jury sit twelve Jurymen. The Galleries, like the Area, are full of painfully-excited listeners of both sexes and various ages and different classes of society. On the right side of the Scene, in front, there is a crowd of official and other people, and on the left side of the Scene, in front, another, similar crowd. About the Front Centre there are scattered Groups of Women and young Country-Lads, whose comparative shortness of stature, and positions a little apart from each other, enable us to see something of the Pleaders (as they stand on the floor of the Court at the long Table), the backs of the occupants of the rows of Seats before the Table (between it and us), and* FLORA, *as she stands down under the front of the Witness Box. There are also little groups around the Doors at the Back Corners.*

*All the persons (except* BERTHA, ALICK, *and* FANNY*) connected, directly or indirectly, with the events are present somewhere about the Court.*

*And, for a moment, there is breathless silence, notwithstanding the excitement, while,*

*As the Scene opens,* SERGEANT WELLPLED'S *ringing, earnest peroration to the Jury's heard.*

*Wellpled.* [*in conclusion*] .... and, gentlemen, of course, 't is usual and natural for one engaged as I am now to keenly feel the great and awful weight of his responsibility—to fear, in spite of every care, the issue of his efforts:—but, know, to me, on this occasion, fear or misgiving are *un*known, [*as the excitement greatly increases and murmurs of applause are heard*] for though I stand before you advocating the cause of one charged with the foulest crime man perpetrates—although my learned friend has seemingly established my client's guilt beyond a doubt, by multitudinous and multifarious evidence—though every circumstance connected with this luckless business seems a fresh proving of my client's cunning, and, so, appears to make attempts even at palliation useless, yet, strange as the assertion perhaps sounds, your verdict, gentlemen, will be—"Not guilty!"—Had I possessed an hour or two ago the information which I now possess I might have spared Squire Adam Heathcote the torture of this Trial .... [*seeing the people rising from their seats*

*—losing their self-control—ready to become tumultuous*] In short—to frustrate these malignant, vile, and murderous designs upon my client's reputation, liberty, and life, I'll place before you the pretended victim of his pretended crime! [*amid confusion, "bravos!" "hurrahs!" and exclamatory questions of, "He will do what?" "Ah?" "What then does he say?" etc.,*] Yes, gentlemen, and with the once-called Silvia Heathcote standing in that Witness-box before you, and you from *her* lips getting of this mystery the explanation, I, knowing what will—*must* be, afterwards, your prompt decision shall leave my client, Squire Adam Heathcote,'s safety in your hands!

*Crier.* Si...*lence*! Si...*lence*, in the *Court!*

*Wellpled.* Silvia Mansfield!

[*The excitement now's beyond all power of suppressing it. There is a movement among the Group just inside the Door at the Right Back Corner. The Door opens.* MRS. MANSFIELD, *dressed as seen in Wailingdale, enters—and is stopped, on her way to the Witness-box, by—*MARGERY, *who steps forward hastily from the crowd and looks in her face.*

*Margery.* [*shrieking out so that the whole Court seems shaken by her cries*] Master! master! 't is she? t' is she? [*falling on her knees and, with streaming*

*eyes, lifting her arms toward heaven*] Oh, God! I thank Thee!

[SILVIA *ascends to the Witness-box. Almost all who are engaged or interested in the Prosecution seem thrown into confusion, and move about, and whisper to each other, and* FLORA *and other Witnesses look frightened and confounded (although the prosecuting Counsel* (SERGEANT PITMAN) *smiles with scorn),—while the whole Court seems 'taken as by storm,' and murmurs loud of sympathy for* HEATHCOTE *(who has fallen forward, with his head upon the front or coping of the Dock) mingled with cries of "Saved!" "He's saved!" fill the crammed building, unchecked by the Judges, who seem greatly moved.*

*Then, as the noise subsides a little, and the Judges are becoming more composed (the centre one, now, leaning over, listening to some low-toned, grave communication of the Clerk's while some one at the Table of the Barristers is whispering with* PITMAN *and consulting anxiously a Document), the voice of the Court-Crier (Usher)'s heard again.*

*Crier.* Si...*lence*—in the *Court*!

*Wellpled.* [*to* MRS. MANSFIELD] What is your name, please?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Mansfield—Silvia Mansfield.

*Wellpled.* Are you married?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Yes.

*Wellpled.* What was your maiden name?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Silvia Heathcote.

*Wellpled.* Do you know the prisoner?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* He is Squire Adam Heathcote,—I am his niece.

*Wellpled.* A niece of his?—er . . . .

*Mrs. Mansfield. The* niece of his—he never had another.

*Wellpled.* Oh!—Well—when did you see him last?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* A little more than two years since, but I—I—cannot talk of that.

*Wellpled.* [*with pity in his tone, but with a confident defiant waving of his hand toward* PITMAN] I fear you 'll *have* to talk of that—but—*I*'ll not pain you.—[*after a moment's consideration*] Perhaps I'd better at once leave you to my learned friend.

[*Then, as* WELLPLED *resumes his seat,* PITMAN, *smiling contemptuously, rises—amid a general hush.*

*Pitman.* [*to* MRS. MANSFIELD] Now, Ma'am—your name?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Mansfield.

*Pitman.* Your Christian name, I mean?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* My Christian name is known here, I presume—'t is, as I've said ....

*Pitman.* [*interrupting her*] We presume nothing! What is your Christian name? upon your oath, remember.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Silvia.

*Pitman.* As you have said before,—and you dare swear that your name 's Silvia?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* It needs no daring; it ....

*Pitman.* [*interrupting her rudely, and sharply*] I am not asking what it needs! and I 'll have no prevarication?—answer me, at once, Ma'am!

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I have already told you that my ....

*Pitman.* [*interrupting her again, in a loud, insolent, browbeating manner*] Who asks you, pray, what you've already told? [*turning to the* JUDGE] M Lord! this woman's shuffling answers ....

*George Heathcote.* [*who sits at the long Table, next to* MANSFIELD—*starting up fiercely, and interrupting* PITMAN] Be civil to George Heathcote's cousin, Sir! or, by the name we bear, I'll ....

*Mansfield.* [*rising at the same instant and putting his hand upon* GEORGE'S *shoulder*] Leave Sergeant Pitman, Sir, to me! it is with me he 'll reckon! and ....

*Crier.* Si...*lence*!—in the *Court*!

*Pitman.* [*to the* JUDGE, *at the moment when the* CRIER *calls out*] M Lord! m Lord! shall this be borne? Am I to be prevented from unmasking a vile perjurer [*as* MRS. MANSFIELD *glances at him with cold contempt, and* GEORGE *is about to rush at him but is restrained by* MANSFIELD] by open and loud threats of bullies in a Court of Justice?

*Polly.* [*hurriedly, to* CLOD,—*now a little more smartly dressed, and growing courageous with excitement—as he and she come toward the Right Front Centre*] How calm she keeps, Clod! does n't she?

*Clod.* [*in the same hurried manner*] *Don't* she? I think it's Silvia because she's such a plucked 'n'! she always was a plucked 'n', was n't she?

*Crier.* Si...*lence*—Si...*lence*! in the *Court!*

*The Judge.* If they can *not* keep silence, brother Pitman, I'll make no allowance even for their real or possible peculiar connection with both prisoner and witness—they 'll have to leave the Court until they 're wanted.—The witness, if I understood her, said her name was Silvia. We do not yet know whether the hard word, perjury, will apply.—Proceed.

*Pitman.* [*to* MRS. MANSFIELD, *as the Court becomes silent again*] Well, ma'am, are you *now* prepared to answer me?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I am.

*Pitman.* What is your Christian name?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Silvia.

*Pitman.* You swear that?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I do.

*Pitman.* Are you a married woman?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I am.

*Pitman.* How long have you been married?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* About two years.

*Pitman.* Not longer than two years?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Not quite so long.

*Pitman.* How much less.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* A month, perhaps.

*Pitman.* 'Perhaps!'—don't you know exactly?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* At this moment—no;—not within a day or two. If you wish it [*pointing to* MANSFIELD, *who, at the Table, prepares to untie a parcel of papers which he holds in his hand*] I can see.

*Pitman.* Never mind! presently!—Now—er—where were you married?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* At Rochelle.

*Pitman.* 'Rochelle!' what in France?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* In France.

*Pitman.* [*with a satirical grin*] Umph!—married at Rochelle, eh? that's a *long* way off!

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Yes.

*Pitman.* What was your maiden name?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Silvia Heathcote.

*Pitman.* You're sure of that?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Yes.

*Pitman.* Yes,—I expected so.—Er—well, now!—er—how many children have you?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* None.

*Pitman.* 'None?'

*Mrs. Mansfield.* None.

*Pitman.* Do you—*swear*—that?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I do.

*Pitman.* What!—have you not a little girl, some four or five years old?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Who calls me, 'mother'? yes,—but she's my husband's brother's child.

*Felton.* [*aside—at the Right Front Centre*] The d - - - l!

*Pitman.* Your 'husband's brother's child!'—and where is *he*, pray—your 'husband's brother?'

*Mrs. Mansfield.* He is dead.

*Pitman.* 'Dead,' eh?—umph!—and where's your husband's brother's wife?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* She is dead.

*Pitman.* 'Dead':—'dead':—[*glancing significantly at the* JUDGE] why, all the folk I want to know about are dead! [*looking sternly at* MANSFIELD—*hitching his gown up further on to his shoulders—and continuing, with increased importance of manner, to* MRS. MANSFIELD] And you were married somewhere away in France?—Er—well, now! yours is a pretty story—how much do you get for telling it, or pay for leave to tell it?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*with a somewhat anxious glance at* FELTON, *who, thinking he is unnoticed by any one, is grinning fiendishly, aside*] Nothing.

*Pitman.* 'Nothing!'—you 're sure of that?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I am.

*Pitman.* [*producing the Agreement between her and* FELTON *and handing it to her*] Do you know that document.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*starting as she takes it and glances at it, and then staring, bewildered, into vacancy*]

Ah?—*that*?—here?—and now?—What then,'s his diabolical intent?—[*letting her arms drop, as her head droops upon her bosom, and speaking faintly, but audibly*] Yes—I do.

[*The Agreement is taken from* MRS. MANSFIELD'S *hand and passed from one to another till it reaches the* JUDGE.

*Pitman.* You 'do!'—Umph!—Now, Madam! need we, think you, further proof that you are paid to personate the murderer's victim? [*a sudden and dead silence, and gloom and disappointment passing like a cloud over almost all countenances throughout the Court*] Have you not in this Court, to-day, deliberately committed perjury—perjury which the prisoner, doubtless, has abetted, if he has not planned it—and perjury, therefore, which establishes, almost beyond all further question, the prisoner's guilt? Have you . . . .

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*interrupting him—in a frenzy of excitement*] No no! [*as she rushes from the Witness-box and along the Passage between the Clerk's Desk and the Barristers' Table*] Oh, uncle! uncle! tell them I am Silvia! tell them I am Silvia! I did not think 'twould turn out so! I only meant to save you—and have crushed you! [*as* HEATHCOTE *bursts from*

*the Prisoner's Dock past the Constables and Soldiers and he and* MRS. MANSFIELD *fall into each other's arms*] Oh tell them I am Silvia! your cruel, loving, long-lost, and loved, Silvia!

*The Judge.* [*to the Officials who are endeavouring to part them*] Let them alone a moment.

[*Then, for a brief space, there is silence, only broken by* MRS. MANSFIELD'S *sobs, while all the People in the Court look on with mingled feelings of doubt, sympathy, and awe—excepting* WELLPLED, MANSFIELD, GEORGE, *and others, who excitedly are turning over and examining some papers.*

*The Judge.* [*when* MRS. MANSFIELD *has grown calmer*] They must be parted now. [*to the Constables and Soldiers*] Place, please, the witness in the Box again. [MRS. MANSFIELD *is again placed in the Witness-box and* HEATHCOTE *in the Prisoner's Dock*] Perhaps, brother Pitman, 'twill be most in order if before taking this Agreement [*passing it down to the* CLERK] the Court gets placed before it the certificate of her marriage.

*Wellpled.* [*rising, and speaking sadly*] M Lord, we are unfortunate,—Mr. Mansfield tells me he had in his possession the Certificate an hour before coming into Court, but—it is lost.

*Pitman.* [*sneeringly, as* SIR JOHN BLACKBOURNE *whispers to the Judge nearest him, that Judge to the centre one, and the centre one to the third*] Gentlemen of the Jury, 't must be admitted that they *are—most* unfortunate! The people that we want to know about are dead! The marriage has been celebrated a long way off! The documents they want are lost, and those they do n't want will turn up!

*The Judge.* [*to* MRS. MANSFIELD, *and taking no notice of* PITMAN] Justice Blackbourne tells us he remembers Squire Heathcote telling him, about the time his, Heathcote's, niece was missed, that, among other property of hers, money chiefly he believes, she had taken with her trinkets, by means of which, should she dispose of them, he hoped to find her. It seems the authorities could never trace those trinkets. It also seems there was one article which no one, Squire Heathcote thought, besides himself and his unhappy ward, had ever seen after his brother's death,—and which has never been described or mentioned except to some few constables and Justice Blackbourne's self—one article, I say, among them, of greater value, perhaps, than all the rest, and certainly so singular that it is hardly possible Miss Heathcote, if living still, can have forgotten it.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*calmly, but sadly*] It was a ring.

*The Judge.* [*looking at her scrutinizingly, with increased interest and apparent satisfaction*] Yes, truly—'twas a ring! you have it, perhaps?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Alas!—'tis lost.

*Pitman.* [*sarcastically*] Most unfortunate! everything is lost!

*The Judge.* Umph!—[*to* MRS. MANSFIELD] you can describe it, perhaps?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Oh, yes! It was a large ring—as a finger-ring almost too large for anybody's use. It was my mother's,—it had been her father's. There were represented on it a Cupid and an infant Bacchus, laughing at each other through a glass. The figures were of gold—in fact they were a portion of the ring, —the seeming glass they seemed to look through was a diamond—rather large, and poised between them, in the centre.

[*While, during the description of the Ring,* BLACKBOURNE *and the Judges look at* MRS. MANSFIELD, *and whisper to each other,* POLLY *comes hurriedly toward the Right Front.*

*Polly.* [*aside, and staring for a moment in great and serious perplexity*] Ah!—that ring!—Why, 'tis

the ring I saw in Felton's bureau!—and—if it could be got and traced to her 't would prove that she is Silvia beyond all doubt!—But how to get it?—Felton must know he has it,—yet—does n't say so! [*after pausing, and watching* FELTON *furtively, and finding he wo'n't mention it—to* CLOD, *who has just joined her*] Follow me to the Forest-gate, with Lady Blackbourne's horse and Felton's, as soon as no one's looking at you, and I'll love you, Clod! No one 'll question you,—and if they *do*—say that you've orders just to give them, now and then, a little exercise, until their owners leave the Court!

*Clod.* [*aside, to her, and looking almost as excited, and quite as determined, as herself*] Ah?—yes, all right! I will! I will! Of course I will!

[POLLY *steals away before the Right Front Grooves unobserved by any one.*

*Heathcote.* [*in a distracted manner*] My Lord! my Lord! such was the ring! she is . . . .

*The Judge.* Silence, please!—you 'll have an opportunity for speaking, presently.

*Pitman.* M Lord, if I could be allowed to ask the witness, now, one question about that document . . . .

*The Judge.* One moment, brother Pitman!—presently. [*to* MRS. MANSFIELD, *as* CLOD, *unobserved, steals away after* POLLY] It seems that your description of that ring is quite correct,—what has become of it?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* My Lord, I lost it, with all my little store of jewelry, the night that I left home.

*The Judge.* Ah? How?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I was waylaid and robbed, my Lord.

*The Judge.* And where?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* My Lord, not far from here—in fact in Stebbington, between this Court and Heathcote Manorhouse.

*The Judge.* But where?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* On a lone pathway of the Wood, my Lord.

*The Judge.* Is this the first time you have mentioned that to any one?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I told it to the gentleman who's now my husband, and to his sister.

*The Judge.* Where were they when you told them?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* In the Wood, my Lord. They found me there that night during a thunderstorm. We all were on our way to Ortwell, here, to take the coach.

*The Judge.* Umph!—a strange meeting, truly!—And who robbed you?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I only know, my lord, that 't was a man who wore a mask and peasant's frock. I think that he was rather tall, but am not sure of even that. It was quite dark, and I was much alarmed.

*Felton.* [*aside, at the Front Left Centre, staring wildly, while every eye in the Court but his is turned toward the Bench, where the Judges are laying their heads together, in earnest, whispered, consultation*] That *ring*—hers?—Siddal—your lie was worthy of you! Why, what a brainless, o'erreached, h - - l-made fool am I!—Yet—[*grinning*] I've half earned my own forgiveness by planning that disguise—she does n't recognize me!—The *ring*—it should have been destroyed at once, and *shall* be, now, and quickly—or—I may meet destruction, holding it, and she find in it her salvation! Her cards have been played cleverly and strangely—but I shall count too many for her yet! The d - - - l himself can't make them credit her queer story unless that ring is found and traced to her!—'T is long since I have seen it!—I wonder whether it is safe still, in its hiding-place? I must know that at once—[*stealing away by the Left Second Entrance*] I can stay here no longer!

*Pitman.* [*impatiently*] M' Lord . . . .

*The Judge.* [*interrupting him*] We attach small importance to that document. She do n't repudiate it. If she is Silvia Heathcote—*the* Silvia Heathcote—she has signed with her own name, in favour of herself, what she 'd a right to sign if it so pleased her—that is all. Of course, there is some mystery about it.—You may proceed.

*Pitman.* [*to* MRS. MANSFIELD] Well, now—about that ring, Ma'am,—will you swear the ring you speak of was not shown to you when you were in Stebbington, in service ?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I never was in service.

*Pitman.* 'Never in service !'—you did not live some time in Stebbington ?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*impatiently—her natural fire reviving*] 'In Stebbington?' of course ! I have lived half my life in Stebbington ! I tell you, my good man, I'm Silvia Heathcote, and Charles Heathcote's heiress ! if I am not who am I ?

*Pitman.* Don't 'good man' me, Ma'am, but answer me !

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*sarcastically*] Pardon my awkwardness,—the phrase was not, it seems, in your case quite applicable.

*The Judge.* The witness would do well to keep her temper.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* My Lord, I crave your pardon—and the Court's.

*Pitman.* Well, Ma'am—since, with your many losses, you 've lost the ring, too,—er—in short, can only satisfy us that you certainly once knew that such a ring existed—why—I suppose we must n't press you further about that,—but, come, now!—respecting this Agreement—where did you sign it?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* You have it there.

*Pitman.* You need n't tell me *that*,—I want to know whether it is correct?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* It is.

*Pitman.* In all particulars?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Yes.

*Pitman.* The date—the place?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* Correct.

*Wellpled.* [*rising*] M'Lord, we have a witness, who, if....

*Pitman.* [*interrupting him*] Do wait your turn, Sir, *please*! I had to wait for mine! [*to* MRS. MANSFIELD, *as* WELLPLED, *finding himself unheeded by the* JUDGE, *sits down again*] Why did you sign it?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I was asked to do so [*looking round the Court*] by a scoundrel who pretended that he wished

by means of me to save Squire Heathcote, and, by means of that Agreement, to secure from penury the Squire's niece, Silvia, should she afterwards be found alive—sure-mitigating, thus, an evil which might possibly result from the intended good. Not knowing I was Silvia Heathcote he thought his sophistry was quieting my conscience. He had come to me cunningly disguised, thinking no one could know him. I'd recognized him, and was yet by him unrecognized. I knew he was my uncle's enemy. I knew, what he knew not, that I was safe in signing the Agreement—that I'd a right to do so,—and, so—because I wished to see what he would do with it—because I seemed to know that he'd at work some devilish plot against Squire Heathcote—because I thought that I could frustrate his intentions most effectually by seeming to be duped to assist in his designs—because I wished to see the lengths to which his villany would go—because I meant to expose him to the world, and hoped to make his hate of me or mine for ever powerless—I signed it!—and then—he gave or sent it to the Prosecution for Squire Heathcote's condemnation and my own—he himself having, as he fancied, sent me here to drivel perjury!

*Pitman.* Umph!—'to see what he would do with it!'—and so, to please a whim, you ran the risk of damaging the character and cause of your—pretended uncle?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* 'T is easy to be wise, Sir, after the event. This use of that Agreement I did not even think of:—but, whether it were wise—or not—to sign it—I now begin to think that I shall have no reason to regret that it is signed. I say again that I am Adam Heathcote's niece, and *ask* again—if I am not, who am I?—My uncle's cause and character are safe.

*Pitman.* [*satirically*] Umph!—I can't say that I see that.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* [*coldly, and with dignity*] You'll see it presently.

*Pitman.* [*still satirically*] Let's hope so:—but, come, now! who is the other signer of the Agreement?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* The villain who presented it to me.

*Pitman.* Yes, but the villain—who was he?

*Mrs. Mansfield.* One, Robert Felton—though he signed it 'Mortimer,'—the Squire Felton who was here just now—[*looking round the Court again*] whom now I cannot see,—the Squire Felton known to every one in Stebbington.

[*A sudden outburst of surprise and indignation—and then, confusion, murmurs and the Crier's "Si...lence! Si...lence! in the—Court!" and so forth.*

*Pitman.* [*when the excitement has subsided somewhat*] And yet *you* did n't know him?

*The Judge.* She says she *did.*

*Pitman.* Oh, I see!—M' Lord, beg pardon,—I did n't catch that.

*Mrs. Mansfield.* I said he was disguised,—'t would not have been surprising if I had *not* known him.

*The Judge.* The Court is not informed, remember, brother Pitman, how the Prosecution has *obtained* that document.

*Pitman.* M' Lord—with due respect—we are not bound to give that information—the document is not repudiated.

*The Judge.* I think you are at least obliged to say whether 't was handed to you by some one not ashamed to have held it, or sent to you anonymously. *She* says that *Felton* signed it and possessed it,—can *you* produce this *Mortimer?*

*Pitman.* I submit, M' Lord, that when ....

*The Judge.* [*interrupting him*] Well, never mind! there, never mind! proceed in your own fashion—we 'll hear that point raised presently. [*as a tremendous confusion and uproar commences at the Back Right Corner Door and spreads over the whole building*] What is the matter now?

*The Crier.* [*unheeded by every one, and while a Slip of Paper is passed from hand to hand till it reaches the* JUDGE] Si...*lence* in the *Court!*

*The Judge.* [*glancing at the Paper, which the Clerk has handed up to him, while the boy,* ALICK, *and little* FANNY MANSFIELD, *are thrust forward by the Crowd*] Whence comes this Certificate? Who brought it?

*Alick.* I did, my Lord. 'Twas picked up nigh the School-house gate [*pointing to* FANNY *as she is lifted up on to a Ploughman's shoulders*] by this here little 'gal,'—and she showed 'n t' I, and I showed 'n t' Caleb Clod, and Clod told us to roon here with 'n and show 'n t' Officers, cos it might be some 'at as was wanted. He 'd got two horses, and was a-ridin' one on 'em, and had n't time to coom his-self, he said.

*Fanny.* [*seeing* MRS. MANSFIELD *in the Witness-box and stretching out her little arms toward her*] Mama! Mama!—I want to go to Mama! I want to go to Mama!—Mama! Mama!

*The Judge.* Let the child go to her. [*to* PITMAN, *as* FANNY, *passed quickly to the Witness-box, is clinging, kissed and kissing, round* MRS. MANSFIELD'S *neck*] I hold here, brother Pitman, what I asked for—the certificate of marriage of Silvia Heathcote to Morris Mansfield.

[*More confusion—and murmurs of applause and sympathy, mingled with cries of "Poor, poor*

*creature!" "She tells the truth, you see!" "Poor thing!" etc., as* MRS. MANSFIELD *bows her head, —and weeps.*

*Pitman.* [*sneering at* MRS. MANSFIELD *as he stretches his hand toward the Clerk for the Certificate*] Is this what I should see? [*examining it*] What Silvia Heathcote were you? Where is the proof the name was yours at all?

*The Judge.* Something you said about a witness, brother Wellpled?

*Wellpled.* [*starting up and looking round the Court*] Harry Stukely!

*The Judge.* [*indicating* MRS. MANSFIELD *with his hand*] Let her stand down a minute. [*to* PITMAN] She can be recalled.

*Wellpled.* [*to* STUKELY, *who has sprung into the Witness-box almost before* MRS. MANSFIELD *has had time to place herself in front of it, where, through an opening in the Crowd, she is seen standing on the floor of the Court beside* FLORA] Your name?

*Stukely.* Harry Stukely.

*The Judge.* Harry or Henry!

*Stukely.* Harry, my Lord.

*Wellpled.* Tell the jury, Mr. Stukely, what you know about this matter.

*Stukely.* [*turning toward the Jury*] It is a little more than three years, gentlemen, since I first went to Stebbington, engaged to serve Squire Felton. I knew beforehand that he kept few servants. I was *called* his butler, but I served him as a sort of overlooker and worked at almost anything that I could put my hand to. One day, just after I went there—a week or so—about a year, you see, before Miss Heathcote left her home—wanting a little clay I went to dig for some—went where I thought that I could get it easiest. I meant to get it in Squire Felton's field upon the right in Oldbeach Lane. When I got there I noticed, close to the tall hawthorn-hedge, in the corner of Squire Heathcote's meadow, on the left, adjoining Felton's five-barred gate, a pick-axe and a shovel. There 'd been a rubbish heap there, and Squire Heathcote's people had been moving it away. I did n't know, however, that the place was Squire Heathcote's, and, as the ground was loose I thought that I'd dig there, and did so. 'T was looser though than I'd expected—in fact the ground was loose a good way down. 'T was n't the sort of place exactly, that I wanted, but, since I had begun I thought that I'd dig on. —Three feet, it might be, from the surface I turned up some bits of rag—and, then, a hat and shawl—[*general sensation, and low murmurs throughout the Court*] and threw them on the heap of dirt outside the hole—

and then was digging on, when Squire Felton came, sauntering and whistling, down the lane. Seeing what I was doing, he jumped, directly, over the rail-fence, toward me, and turned as pale as death.—[*the sensation increases*] He made me leave the hole at once—threw in the hat and shawl—and told me to fill in again as fast as possible. He watched me while I did so—in fact, he lost all patience and helped me with the other shovel at the last, telling me all the time that there would be some pother (Action for trespass or something of the sort) if any one should hear about our digging there,—the ground was Squire Heathcote's, and he and Squire Heathcote were mortal enemies,—he would n't have it known for worlds, and so on. We left the place much as I'd found it (for we went away together—he would n't leave me), and when, in his own field, we talked about the hat and shawl he said 'twas not our business where the Heathcotes buried their old rags, and warned me not to say to any one we 'd seen them [*the sensation still increases*] or, that, in any way, we had trespassed, as he called it, there. I promised him I would not, and, though I, at the time, thought he seemed over-frightened, finding, afterwards, that we had really trespassed on Squire Heathcote's grounds, and that the Squire and he were *not* good friends, I thought his terror, perhaps, accounted for, and, so, forgot it.

*Crier.* Si...*lence*—in the *Court*!

*Wellpled.* [*to* STUKELY] You forgot it until when?

*Stukely.* Until I heard about these troubles, and thought of what a villain he must be—this Felton—to keep silence when a word from him would clear Squire Heathcote.

[*A burst of applause.*

*Crier.* Si...*lence!* Si...*lence!*

*The Judge.* Less noise we *must* have, or I must clear the Court.

*Wellpled.* I, Mr. Stukely, think, with you, that things look black enough against him, but, our opinion merely—goes for little, here. It is your evidence we want,—that only.—Er . . . .

[*Confusion, again, round the Back Right Corner Door.*

*Bertha.* [*breaking in great excitement through the Crowd*] Where is she? Let me pass? Where is she? Where. . . . [*approaching* MRS. MANSFIELD *and looking, with earnest hesitation, for a moment, into her altered, sad, grave face*] Ah?—[*after looking at her fixedly until she sees her smile*] Yes! Silvia! Silvia,

you!! 'T is you!!! [*springing to* MRS. MANSFIELD'S *outstretched welcoming arms*] Oh! smile again that dear old smile we loved long, long ago! which makes you seem yourself and marks you ours! and comes like health and sunshine on the track of our despair! [*sobbing on her shoulder*] and let me calm me here a moment lest this great joy kill me!

[*Enthusiasm uncontrollable again—increased confusion—and loud applause—with murmurings of sympathy, and cries of "Well done, Bertha!" "God bless Bertha Blackbourne!" "She's the one!" "She can tell us if it 's Silvia!" and so on.*

LADY BLACKBOURNE, MANSFIELD, GEORGE, *and* SQUIRE HEATHCOTE *(who has broken from the Prisoner's Dock and is followed by the* OFFICERS*) have rushed to* MRS. MANSFIELD *and* BERTHA *in an instant* — MRS. MANSFIELD *(clasping* SQUIRE HEATHCOTE'S *hand upon the Left and* MORRIS'S *upon the Right, with* BERTHA *clinging to her neck, and* GEORGE *and* LADY BLACKBOURNE *in a bending, wondering attitude before her, and the* OFFICERS *around her uncle) stands looking calmly up to heaven with tearful eyes while* STUKELY *from the Witness-box looks down upon them all with pride and sympathy, and* BLACKBOURNE, *with his face concealed, is sitting on the Platform,—and, at what time all eyes are turned toward* MRS. MANSFIELD *and the group around her, the* JUDGES, *slowly, seriously, rise, to leave the Bench, as, over the strange tumult ringing out, is heard—*

*The Crier.* This Court stands adjourned till two o'clock!

[*And then to Music various, but subdued (plaintive—dramatic—then exultant—and then weird) the wild, profound, intense, unchecked excitement of the Court is hid from view, and we are passed through*

SCENE THE FIFTH.—*The* COUNTRY LANE *again, and with the* SIGN POST, *on the Left—now pointing, Right and Left, toward* "*STEBBINGTON*" *and* "*ORTWELL.*"

[*Here,* FELTON *passes, rapidly, from Left to Right, toward* "*Stebbington:*" *and then, after a little while, a* LABOURER *and a* LAD *pass, hastily, from Right to Left, toward* "*Ortwell.*"

*Another interval.*

*Then* POMFRET *passes, also somewhat hastily, from Left to Right, following* FELTON.

*An interval again.*

*And then some* SOLDIERS, *with a* MILITARY OFFICER, *follow after* POMFRET, *and—after another pause—some* COUNTRY PEOPLE *hurry past toward Ortwell:—and then some* CONSTABLES *toward Stebbington, following the* SOLDIERS, POMFRET, *and* SQUIRE FELTON.

*Afterwards* STRAGGLERS *pass, from time to time, from Right to Left, toward Ortwell—until the Scene is changed to*

SCENE THE SIXTH.—*The Over-furnished, Snug, Old-fashioned* BACHELOR'S ROOM *in 'Felton Lodge' again.*

[POLLY, CLOD, *and* LILLY MANSFIELD *are discovered at the Chest of Drawers.* POLLY *is kneeling, with her arm stretched into the opening made by taking out the Top Drawer, which they have placed aside, upon the floor, and* CLOD *and* LILLY *are bending over her.*

*Polly.* [*as a loud snap like something opening with a spring is heard*] That 's it! [*pulling out the little Cabinet*] I have it, Clod! [*hastily searching among its contents*] Yes! [*holding up the Curious Ring discovered there, and left there by her, two years gone*] here it is!

*Felton.* [*coming in by the Doorway at the Back Left Centre, through which the top of a Staircase is seen—passing them in his haste, and turning, as he reaches the Front Left Centre, with a ferocious yell*] Ah! [*throwing himself upon them*] Dog! Thieves! What are you doing there?

*Clod.* [*seizing him by the throat and hurling him to the ground, before the Left Second Entrance*] 'Dog'

in ye' teeth, Bob Felton! [*darting with great desperation to the Gun which hangs upon the Wall, and seizing it by the barrel and brandishing it in the air*] Offer to meddle with us and I 'll brain ye'! [*as* FELTON *rises*] I'm only Caleb Clod, ye' know, but I can take a woman's part, and if ye' stir a step towards her you 're a dead man, by gums!

*Felton.* [*about to spring upon* CLOD] How dare you touch my fowling-piece, you idiot? Drop it, or I'll fling your stupid carcass headlong down yon stairs!

*Parson Pomfret.* [*rushing in and seizing* FELTON *by the collar*] Two words first, Squire Felton!

*Felton.* [*trying to shake him off*] Hands off, Sir! This is my house! By heaven, I'll . . . .

*Pomfret.* [*grasping him so firmly as almost to prevent his struggles even*] Swear not by heaven! nor think to shake me off! For God and truth I've twice your strength and fifty times your courage, coward! Besides you are outnumbered!

[LILLY *runs to the Pistols which are hanging on the wall, and, seizing one of them, covers, with it,* FELTON, *whom* POMFRET *simultaneously casts off and stands confronting.*

*Pomfret.* [*keeping his eye on* FELTON, *but speaking to* POLLY, *who is on one side of him and a little way*

*behind him, near the Back Right Centre*] I'm told that you know, Polly, that he has the ring that 's wanted?

*Polly. I* have it now, Sir! We found it in that cabinet!

*Pomfret.* [*to* FELTON] How you obtained that ring, and why, when it was asked for, in your hearing, in the Court, you did not say you had it—you will have to tell, among your explanations about other matters, to those who 've more authority to ask than I have! [*to* LILLY, *but without turning to look at her*] Lower that pistol, child, and run for help!

[*At the same instant* LILLY *hurries to the Doorway and* FELTON *dashes toward it, past* POMFRET, *to escape, and* CLOD, *expecting* FELTON'S *sudden movement to be toward* POLLY *and the Ring, brandishes the Gun again as* FELTON *is confronted at the threshold by* SILVIA, *who, meeting* LILLY, *has snatched the Pistol and presents it at him.*

*Silvia.* [*with a fierce aspect but in a cold and quiet tone*] No other help is needed,—*I* am here. [*to* FELTON *in a louder tone*] Back, villain! [*raising her voice higher and higher as he comes backward, step by step, from the advancing Pistol, into the Apartment*] Where 's the ring? The ring! the ring! where is it? Tell me or I fire!

*Polly.* [*holding up the Ring*] 'T is here!

*Silvia.* [*forgetting* FELTON *for the moment, and stepping hastily to* POLLY] Ah! let me have it! [*looking at it as* FELTON *makes another rush for the Door and succeeds in getting out*] Yes! thank heaven! Traced to myself, 't will prove beyond all doubting my identity!

*Mansfield.* [*without*] Whither away, friend?

*Felton.* [*without*] Let me pass!

*Mansfield.* [*without*] Not I!

*Felton.* [*without, as a desperate struggle is heard*] I'll not be stopped!

*Mansfield.* [*without*] You shall not go!

*Felton* [*without*] Then I or you . . . .

[*They appear outside the Door, on the Stair-landing, struggling,—and* MANSFIELD *hurls* FELTON *back, through the Doorway, into the Room again, and then follows him up and seizes him by the throat.*

*Mansfield.* Where, villain! is the ring that you heard mentioned in the Court and would not say you 'd got, though . . . . !

*Silvia.* [*holding up the Ring*] Here! Here! it 's here!

*Mansfield.* [*glancing toward her, but still keeping his hold on* FELTON] Ah! how have you obtained it?

*Silvia.* 'T was found in his possession—in this drawer!

*Mansfield.* [*shaking* FELTON] How came you by it, scoundrel? [*raising his clenched fist as if about to strike him*] tell me, quickly, or, by ....

*A Constable.* [*at the door, interrupting* MANSFIELD] Gently, there! gently! don't hurt the man! he's wanted! [*coming forward toward* MANSFIELD *and* FELTON *as the latter is released by the former*] As for the ring—his good friend, Siddal, gave it him, [*as* FELTON *starts, and seems to lose his courage*] and now relieves him of his obligation by talking of it. Siddal robbed Miss Silvia Heathcote of it in the forest, here, two years ago,—you 'll hear him say so in the Court, all of ye,' if you'll but get back quick,—[*glancing at* MRS. MANSFIELD] and some of ye' had better I can tell ye', —you 'll be wanted, perhaps:—[*looking at his Watch*] the Judges 'll be upon the bench again in half-an hour. —[*glancing at a* MILITARY OFFICER *who is now standing just inside the Doorway and two* SOLDIERS *who are standing before it*] All that 'ere's 'by the way' though—[*to* FELTON] there's a heavier charge, I think, ag'in' ye', Robert Felton.... That's ye' name....?....

*Felton.* [*savagely*] I think so.

*The Constable.* [*continuing*] . . . . a heavier charge than anything—conspiracy, or whatever 't might be called—that might arise out o' this trial o' Squire Heathcote's—'cept that ye' trouble comes at first through evidence that Stukely has been givin' 'em about them clothes. Ye' see, our old friend, Siddal, is in trouble about that fire the other night at Fordingham's, and since his troubles he 's been talkative, and—er—you 're charged, then, with the murder of your wife.

[FELTON *falls as if he had been shot—there is a general exclamation of terror and surprise—and all attempt to gather round him.*

*Constable.* Oh, none o' that, ye' know! Come, keep off, that 's good people! [*to* POMFRET] Tell 'em to go away, Sir, please! they 'll all be late! they will, indeed! and I can do fust-rate without 'em— [*taking a pair of Handcuffs from his pocket, and beginning to fasten them on* FELTON'S *wrists*] can slip these bracelets on him comfortable while he 's layin' so!

*Pomfret.* [*to the others, who turn with him while he is speaking and leave the Scene—the* SOLDIERS *at the Door making way for them to pass*] Come!—it is well, perhaps, to have seen, friends, how the evil-doer will sometimes meet his doom, but we have stayed full long,—the constable is right.

[*And then—almost while* POMFRET *is still speaking —the Scene is changed to*

SCENE THE SEVENTH.—*The* COUNTRY LANE *again, with, on the Left, the* SIGN POST, *pointing, Right, toward* "*STEBBINGTON,*" *and Left, toward* "*ORTWELL*".

[*After a pause, the girl,* MEG, *enters, from the Right, running, and turns and beckons some one (for the moment unseen) who, as it seems, is coming after her.*

*Then, the boy,* ALICK, *enters, almost breathless, overtaking her.*

*Meg.* [*impatiently*] Well? *what* do they *say?* what do they say?

*Alick.* Oh—er—stop a minute!—they say—er—that the Trial 's squashed, and the Court at Ortwell 's ris'—done like, and the Judges left it, to see the dollops o' fun that 's a-goin' on in the town!—that Squire Heathcote has got off!—that Mrs. Mansfield 's—er—Silvia Heathcote, and 's a-goin' to be a "My Lady!"—that all the 'gals' in Stebbington and Ortwell are a cryin' for joy, ye' know, and want to kiss that

Harry Stukely if Polly was agreeable!—that all the men say Polly 's good enough to be a queen! and Clod —er—my eye! do n't they praise up Clod for floorin' Felton when they got the ring! and then, some feller they call 'Siddal' 's taken up for settin' fire to Fordingham's the other night! and he 's bin peachin' ag'in' Felton about Felton murderin' 's own wife that them 'ere clothes they dug up has got some 'at t' do with! that Felton and his old 'pal,' Siddal, have jest left the lock-up, here, and, if we look sharp, we shall see 'em a-goin' into Ortwell in a cart . . . . !

*Meg.* [*interrupting him*] What! to be tried?

*Alick. No!* not to-day! the Ortwell Court is ris'!—it 's over, do n't I tell ye'?—jest to be put in jail, there, till they 're wanted!—an' Lawyer Shrivel 's bolted an' nobody 'll go after'n'! and—er—*sich* a lot! hooray!

*Meg.* [*as they hurry off toward Ortwell*] O, Gimini! come along! come along!

[*Then,* MEG *and* ALICK *are (at intervals, and in accordance with the variations of the medley-music from serene to gay—from odd to pretty) followed by people of all sorts of callings and costumes until the Scene is changed to*

SCENE THE EIGHTH.—*A* MAIN STREET *in Ortwell. —The sides of the View are the sides of the Street,*

*which is seen stretching in long perspective straight away into the distance. It is a clean, smart, old-fashioned, countrified, broad, business-thoroughfare, with, here, a Public-house-Sign swinging out—there, a Church-entrance prominent—there, again, a Banking house, and so on.—It seems to run off far beyond the Right and Left Back Corners, where are gay Corner shops, discovering how, there, another Main Street crosses that which constitutes the Scene.—The houses have Upstair-bowed-windows, out of which are leaning, looking, all sorts of people in expectation and excitement. Those who are at the Windows beyond the Right and Left Back Corners are looking up the Street, toward us, —and those at Windows nearer are looking down the Street, away from us.*

[*As the Scene opens a Dance is going on, in which are engaged* STUKELY *and* POLLY, CLOD *and* LILLY *(apparently quite taken with each other, and* CLOD *now looking less ridiculous— more manly and sensible),* JOE *and* MARA, MOUSE *and* JESSIE, FEEDEM *and* NELL, PENDLEBURY *and* DOL, ROGER ALLROUND *and* DAME ALLROUND, HUMPHRY DELLBROOK *and* DAME DELLBROOK, MEG *and* ALICK, KATE, NANCY, BETTY, SUKEY, CARY, LAURA, JULIA, ROSE, LUCY, PHEBE, JENNIT, BEN, DICK, HUGH, *the* SEXTON, *the* COURT-CRIER *and others, while* SIR JOHN BLACKBOURNE, LADY BLACKBOURNE, MARGERY, POMFRET, WELL-PLED *and the* JUDGES, *at the Right Front Grooves, stand looking on.*

*The Dancers dance the first four double-bars of "Waggoner's Whistle,"—then stop, and sing the last two.—They repeat the Dance and Chorus,—and,*

*then, they dance and sing them a third time, and* CLOD, *near the Left Second Entrance, conspicuously (but, now, quietly) makes love to* LILLY *(who appears well pleased) during each singing of the Chorus.*

*As, in the last, loud, gay repeat of the refrain, they reach the end, within a bar or so, two or three voices at the Back cry out, "Here! Here they are!" "The rogues are coming!" "Here! look! this way!" "This way! look! look!" "This way! this way!" etc, and the Singers, leaving off abruptly, crowd toward the Back Right Corner, while the Music's breaking into "The Rogue's March."*

*Then, seated on a piece of plank, fastened, from back to front, upon the top of an old Dray drawn by a miserable Horse,* FELTON *and* SIDDAL, *handcuffed, with their faces toward us, appear at the Back Right Corner.—A* CONSTABLE *is walking before the Horse, and a* MILITARY OFFICER *and two* SOLDIERS *follow the Dray.*

FELTON *hangs down his head, in abject shame and shuddering despair, and* SIDDAL *(while all—except* SIR JOHN *and* LADY BLACKBOURNE, MARGERY, POMFRET, WELLPLED, *and the* JUDGES*—hissing and hooting pelt them both with rubbish) scowls hate, askance, upon, and, with his thumb, points, grinning, to, his less burglarious-looking but more cowardly companion.*

*So, as the general hoots and shouts and peltings are going on, and the people who have been looking down upon the dancers hiss and groan from the Windows, the Dray crosses the Scene and disappears at the Back Left Corner, followed by the Crowd (excepting* CLOD *and* LILLY *who linger in a Doorway)—* POMFRET *and* MARGERY *and the* BLACKBOURNES *slowly following the throng as the gazers leave*

*their Windows and* WELLPLED *and the* JUDGES *turn and go away, in an opposite direction, by the Right Second Entrance.*

*Then* CLOD *and* LILLY, *leaving their retreat, begin to wander about, whispering.*

*Silvia.* [*richly and elegantly dressed in Dove-coloured Satin, White Lace, and Pearls, and wearing a White-Satin Hat with Blue Feathers—appearing in haste, before the Left Front Grooves*] Lil! Lil! why, what's the matter, girl? what, in the world, are you loitering here for? [*shaking hands with* CLOD] Come! you must make haste, both of you! Uncle's almost ready, and they'll make his journey home triumphant, I can tell you! [*speaking low—to* LILLY, *whom she draws toward the front, out of* CALEB'S *hearing*] What are you doing here with Caleb?

*Lilly.* [*also speaking low, and with a droll affectation of innocence*] Eh?—I don't know,—er—you'd better ask *Caleb* what *he*'s doing here with *me.*

*Silvia.* [*looking at* LILLY *fixedly, and with her brows knit, but with her eyes full of fun, doubt, and curiosity*] Lil?

*Lilly.* [*in a demure tone, and looking archly askance at* SILVIA] I've fall'n in with a sweetheart—IN A FOREST, IN A THUNDERSTORM.

*Silvia.* [*first, standing, for some time, staring straight before her, with her lips apart, and a smile stealing over her face, and then turning to* LILLY *and trying to frown again*] But—er . . . .

*Lilly.* [*nodding, with a comical leer at her*] Yes, —you 've just guessed it.

*Silvia.* 'Guessed it!'—guessed what?

*Lilly.* Hush!—why, that Caleb is in love with me!

*Silvia.* [*scarce able to believe her ears or suppress her laughter*] In *love*—with *you*?

*Lilly.* Don't speak so loud!—'in love—with me?'—of course! How should *he* know I was afraid the pistol would go off when I was holding it at Felton? Why, bless your heart! he thinks me quite a heroine!

*Silvia.* [*still seeming full of the fun of the thing*] And you—think him . . . . ?

*Lilly.* A man who 'll do for Lilly Mansfield's hero. Why, Silvy, dear! he'd make a first-class country-gentleman! I *know* that he can ride, and shoot, and knock a man down to protect a woman, and *everybody* —*says* that he 's goodnatured and honest to the core!

*Silvia.* [*a little more serious*] Hush!—But, Lilly? surely . . . . ?

*Lilly.* [*interrupting her by putting her hand over*

*her mouth*] There! don't bother me! *I'll* make something of him—when we 're married!

*Silvia.* [*still more serious*] 'Married!'—don't talk of marriage, child! that 's at the *other end* of *courtship!*

*Lilly.* Is it? I shall begin, then, at the wrong end—marry him first, and, afterwards, make—[*in a yet lower accent*] what I please of him.

*Silvia.* Lil! Lil! don't talk so madly!

*Lilly.* Sil! Sil! don't talk so motherly! Only listen, now!—[*imitating the 'calling out' in Church*] "George Heathcote, bachelor, and Bertha Blackbourne, spinster!" "Harry Stukely, bachelor, and Polly What's-her-name, spinster!" and then, "Caleb Clod, bachelor, and Lilly Mansfield, spinster, just to make the number odd, and all the couples lucky!"

*Silvia.* [*losing all command of herself and laughing out right merrily*] Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!—Ha! ha! ha! ha! why, Lil . . . . ?

*Lilly.* Why, Sil! I never heard you laugh like that before! only let Morris hear you laugh like that, and earth he 'll think half heaven! [*to* CALEB, *who stands looking at them inquisitively, with a smile upon his face*] O, we 've been talking about you so, Caleb!

*Caleb.* I know it.

*Lilly.* What!

*Caleb.* [*nodding significantly*] *I* heard *some* of it.

*Silvia.* [*laughing very mirthfully again*] Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! Well, that's rare fun! [*to* LILLY *who stands looking at* CALEB, *and seems half ashamed and half amused*] Oh, Lilly! Lilly! what 'll you do now? [*to* CALEB, *kindly*] But, there! we said no harm about you, Caleb—we would not, and we could not. [*politely and almost seriously*] I thank you heartily for the brave help you gave us at the moment of our need and shall not soon forget it,—[*to* LILLY] but we must really go!—Come! quick, Lil! or you 'll not be dressed in time!

*Lilly.* 'Dressed!' [*taking hold of, and quizzing,* SILVIA'S *dress*] what—?

*Silvia.* Yes,—these are to be our colours. Come! wear them for me once again, good Lil! you have n't worn them since my wedding-day.

*Lilly.* Sha' n't we look singular?

*Silvia.* No:—when I chose our dresses, Lil, two years ago, the choice was influenced, in part, by recollecting one which Bertha had, just like them, and now, at my request, has on. [*leading* LILLY *toward the Left Second Entrance*] Come! come along!

*Lilly.* [*running back to* CALEB *and whispering*] Dress yourself up quick, Caleb! and as grand as an emperor, mind!

*Caleb.* [*in a like undertone, and laughing as he hastens away by the Right Second Entrance*] All right! *I* understand!

[*Then* LILLY *runs across the Scene and quits it, following* SILVIA, *who has gone off by the Left Second Entrance.*

*Bertha.* [*dressed, like* SILVIA, *in Dove-coloured Satin, White Lace, Pearls, a White Hat, and Blue Feathers—entering, at the Back Left Corner, in haste, and looking anxiously about her*] Dear dear! how tiresome! Wherever can she be? [*to* PARSON POMFRET *who enters by the Left Second Entrance*] Oh, Mr. Pomfret! have you seen Silv .... lai .... er .... ?

*Pomfret.* [*with an inquiring smile—helping her out with her sentence*] 'Lady Mansfield,' you would say?

*Bertha.* Yes—er—I suppose that we may call her so. Er—has *she*, Sir, can you tell me, heard the news?

*Pomfret.* Of this strange turn of fortune for the Mansfields, and her husband's title? oh, yes, I think

so! I thought she had come here, perhaps, to find Miss Lilly and tell her of it. But Silvia wo' n't, to-day, care much for anything besides Squire Heathcote, and it's just possible Sir Morris thought it not worth while to tell her, for the moment, of what she 'll deem so unimportant amid her all-absorbing joy at going, with her uncle, and their old love, back to the Manorhouse, but I *supposed* she knew it. [*to* MARTHA *who appears at a Window on the Right*] Do you, pray, know, by sight, the lady they call Mrs. Mansfield?

*Martha.* The lady they call, 'Silvia,' Sir?

*Pomfret.* Ah. Yes.

*Martha.* Indeed do I!

*Pomfret.* Can you, then, tell me whether she has passed this way within the last half-hour?

*Martha.* Oh, yes, Sir!—she was here a little while ago—she and another lady,—they were talking to the gentleman the people were all shaking hands with and calling, 'Caleb.'

*Pomfret.* [*to* BERTHA] Ah? [*to* MARTHA] Thank you, thank you!—do you know which way they went?

*Martha.* The ladies [*pointing over to the Left*] that way, Sir, and [*pointing down to her own side of the Street*] Mr. Caleb, this.

*Pomfret.* Thank you—thank you kindly! [*to* BERTHA] Caleb is quite a hero now?

*Bertha.* Yes; do you think it strange, Sir?

*Pomfret.* No,—not at all. George always has maintained that Caleb, although simplehearted, was not a foolish man. [*smiling*] His weakest points have been his suffering the village-girls to joke him into the belief that he was always over head and ears in love with one or other of them, and .... [*in a jocular tone, as* BERTHA *looks down and blushes*] .... Nay nay, Miss Blackbourne! you need n't blush for them—they meant no harm, and they must have their fun! love-making has n't been for them so serious a matter as for you, you know! .... and—I was going to say—his thorough countryman-like terrors about ghosts, dark deeds, and all the things, nonsensical or bad, known as 'The Horrible,' —for, with his fellows, he was always brave, and always quick to side with honesty and truth, and these two qualities have only been developed somewhat by the circumstances which have, to-day, surrounded him. [*a tumult, as of many voices, and hurrahing, in the distance, faintly heard*] His tact and courage, from the moment Polly whispered to him in the Court—his sending to the Court, by Alick, the Certificate, and word to me to follow him and Polly, quickly, down to Felton's, and his manner of encountering a desperate bad man, were admirable!

*Bertha.* You would not have been there, then, had it not been for him?

*Pomfret.* Certainly not, nor Silvia either. [*hurrahing again, and a tumult, in the distance—still heard faintly*] Hark!—she and Miss Lilly will be seeking *you*, Miss Blackbourne, *now*,—I think I would not tarry were I you. Come! will you take my arm?

[*They leave the Scene by the Back Left Corner. The tumult in the distance recommences, continues, and increases. The music of "The March of the Silver Trumpets" is heard, approaching gradually. The People come again to the Upstair-Windows of the Houses,—and cries, rather more distinct, of "God bless Squire Heathcote!" "Hurrah for Lady Mansfield!" "Silvia Mansfield!" "Silvia for ever!" "Three cheers for Harry Stukely!" "God bless Bertha Blackbourne!" etc, are also heard.*

*Caleb.* [*in the neat, becoming, rather-sportsmanlike, dress of a country gentleman, running across the Back of the Scene, greatly excited*] Hooray! hooray! God bless everybody! hooray! hooray! hooray!

[*And then, as* CALEB'S *voice dies away the distant shouts increase—the sounds of the gay tumult, and of the music of "The March" are somewhat more distinct—and (after a few moments)* BERTHA,

SILVIA, *and* LILLY *(in their Dove-coloured Satin, White Lace, Pearls, White Satin Hats, and large Blue Feathers, all dressed alike, with small transparent Scarfs thrown loosely off their shoulders) appearing at the Back Left Corner, come forward, laughing, crying, wiping their tears away, and talking, and seem almost beside themselves with joy.*

*Silvia.* [*laughing and crying in a breath*] Ha! ha, ha, ha, ha!—Oh, Bertha! Bertha!—this is too much! —I....!

*Bertha.* [*sportively slapping her on the back, and wiping her own tears away*] Be quiet, Sil, dear! Do! Ha, ha! Why, we are looking quite ridiculous!

*Lilly.* Ha! ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!—Well! *I* wo'n't ride in *that* coach, ladies, I can tell you!

*Bertha.* Why not?

*Lilly.* Why, they 'll upset us!

*Silvia.* [*as the rich Trumpet-blasts come crashing near, and Villagers and Tonwsfolk burst upon the Scene, running and shouting*] Nonsense, Lil! not they! See see! they 're coming! *here* they are!

[*The* TRUMPETERS *and other Music-folk appear, now, by the Back Left Corner, followed close by* SQUIRE HEATHCOTE, GEORGE, *and* BLACKBOURNE, *in an*

*open Carriage, drawn by Peasants, and surrounded by a Crowd which, in wild, glad commotion, is vociferating, "Hurrah for Heathcote Manorhouse! Hurrah for Squire Heathcote!" "Stukely! Stukely! Where's Harry Stukely?" "Silvia!" "Bertha!" "Where's Lady Mansfield and Bertha?" "Hurrah! Hurrah!" etc, while Women at the Windows wave white Handkerchiefs, and Neckerchiefs of various colours, to denote they share the joy.*

*Then,* CALEB's *pulled from group to group 'mid exclamations of, "Come! shake hands, Caleb!" "God bless you, Caleb!" "You're a brave fellow!" "So he is! he is!" "Shake hands!" and so forth,—until* SQUIRE HEATHCOTE, *stepping from the Carriage, comes to the Front, surrounded by* GEORGE, SILVIA, BERTHA, PENDLEBURY, POMFRET, SIR JOHN *and* LADY BLACKBOURNE, MARGERY, *and little* FANNY.

*Heathcote.* [*in a deep, and somewhat low, but kindly tone*] Where is Mr. Stukely?

*Polly.* [*from* HEATHCOTE'S *left, and just behind him, coming forward with her hand in* STUKELY'S] Here, Squire!

*Heathcote.* [*smiling*] Ah?—I see!—you have joined hands already.

*Stukely.* And hearts too, Squire, I hope, this many-a-day.

*Heathcote.* I hope so, too, friend Stukely. [*to* POLLY] But that is not the hand,—here, let me set you right.

[*he draws* POLLY *over to his Right—takes her right hand—and places it in* STUKELY'S] There—be a blessing to him. I'll not forget the dower I owe you, nor keep you waiting for it—you'll come to me to-morrow, and bring Stukely with you. [*as* STUKELY *leads her away*] Where's Caleb? [*as* CALEB *steps forward without speaking—shaking hands with him, heartily, and then laying, pleasantly, his hand upon his shoulder*] Well, Caleb, man! you have made love to half the girls in Stebbington, they tell me—and yet they have n't stol'n your heart away! you have a stout one still—how 's that?—'T was only fun perhaps—only fun?—yes, *that* was it,—and since we've such a worthy, clever knot of girls in Stebbington you have done well in seeking their society—done credit to yourself. I never knew a man who liked the company of sensible, good women who was n't a fine fellow. They 've brought you out at last, and to some purpose,—and yet, among them all, you 've not secured a sweetheart—eh?

[MORRIS MANSFIELD *leads* LILLY *forward, and places her close opposite to* CALEB,—*and* CALEB, *seeing the* SQUIRE'S *surprise, looks at her, anxiously, a moment's space—and then holds out his hand for hers.*

*Lilly.* [*looking, archly, up, and whining in a serio-comic tone, after a pause, during which, pretending*

*to be ashamed, she has bowed her head, and kept her hand down, hanging by her side*] Alas, alas! Will nobody put my hand in his?—[*to* MANSFIELD, *rapidly*] I'll do it myself, mind! if you don't be quick!

[MANSFIELD, *with humorous haste, seizes her hand, and places it in* CALEB'S, *while* HEATHCOTE, GEORGE, *the* BLACKBOURNES, SILVIA, *and* BERTHA *smile and look surprised, and all the others giggle.*

*Lilly.* [*with a merry look, holding up her finger to* SILVIA *and* BERTHA] Now!—if anybody laughs, remember! Caleb 's to knock 'em down with a gun, and I'm to hold a pistol at 'em—so, beware!

[*The laughter, for a moment,'s loud and general, 'mid cries of "Bravo!" "Well done!" "Hurrah!" "Good!" etc, and, as* CALEB *moves away with* LILLY, BLACKBOURNE, *jollily, leads* BERTHA, *blushing, forward.*

*Blackbourne.* Where 's Master George?

*Lady Blackbourne.* [*bringing* GEORGE *from behind* SQUIRE HEATHCOTE] Here! here he is, Sir John!

*Heathcote.* [*looking cheerfully around on all as* SIR JOHN *places* BERTHA'S *hand in* GEORGE'S] And where 's *my* sweetheart—for, I *had*—a little one?

*Fanny.* [*running up to him with childish glee*] Here I am!

*Heathcote.* [*smiling kindly on her*] Ah! I thought you would n't run away so early after our sly bargain! But, look you! I'm afraid the parson 'll not marry us!

*Fanny.* Why wo'n't he?

*Heathcote.* He'll say you are not tall enough.

*Fanny.* Yes, I am!—tall enough to be kissed!

*Heathcote.* [*as, gently, he stoops down, and* FANNY *raises herself, quick, on tiptoe for a kiss*] Well, truly! we might, perhaps, accommodate that matter! [*again looking round upon them all*] I find that I am weak and weary, friends, and must get home, to rest and quiet for awhile. You love me well enough, I well believe, to think me grateful, though, for the present, I, for all your love and sympathy, can only say—'God bless you!'

*All.* [*as the Music whispers "Waggoners Whistle" again*] And God bless you, Squire Heathcote! Three cheers for Squire Heathcote!—Hip! hip! hurrah!—Hip! hip! hurrah!

*Caleb.* Again!

*All.* Hip! hip! hurrah!

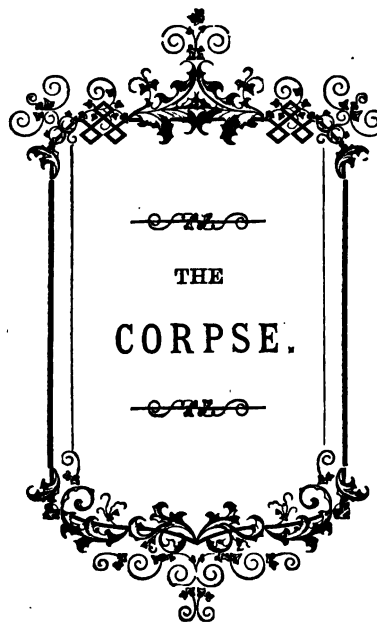
*Caleb.* One for a blessing!—Now, then! all together!

*All.* Hip! hip! hurrah!

[*The Music continues. All the feet move as though on tiptoe for a dance,—but* HEATHCOTE *leads* MARGERY *to the Carriage—and he and* GEORGE *hand in* LILLY, *and* FANNY, *and* SILVIA, *and* BERTHA, *and then get in themselves.*—STUKELY, CALEB, *and some others, struggle for a moment, in good humour, for a place beside the Carriage-pole; and then, amid the cheerings of the crowd, and wavings of bright colours from the Windows—with the blithe "Waggoners Whistle" Chorus played and chanted louder—the gay Procession moves triumphantly away—and as the many voices still recede and soften in the distance, gradually,*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

NOTE—The music of "Awake, my Love," "Though Sweet the Hour," and "Waggoners Whistle" may be had of the publisher.


THE
CORPSE.

# THE CORPSE.

*"—still as death*
*He waited with a lover's eager prayer*
*For some soft signal....*

. . . . . .

*A sound— so low, it seemed like silv'ring light*
*Dropped upon Arcady, or wakeful flowers*
*That, waving, kiss and whisper,—"*

—MARRIED IN BLACK.

I AM aware that in disclosing what follows I may incur censure. It is one of those rare, strange, dark circumstances in a man's life which are, I suppose, as a rule, confined to his own breast. As a mystery and

a secret I have hitherto wished to carry it with me to my grave. But constant brooding over an event at once bewildering and shocking has so pained my thought and gloomed my imagination that I am, at last, forced to seek to relieve my mind by unburthening it.

To those who may feel inclined to blame me for revealing what I admit is, perhaps, not much to my credit, I can only say that, I hope they may never know the horror of being silent in a position so appalling.

My poor Letitia was in her shroud.

I was about retiring to rest. 'T was nearly midnight, —but I felt that I must linger yet a little longer and see her once again before I slept.

The other inmates of the house were fast asleep.

Candle in hand and shoeless to the chamber of the stone-like sleeper I stole, and entered softly.

The coffin was on tressels in the middle of the room —its foot toward the window. In that receptacle—black, narrow, angular, and horrid—was the whole that earth possessed of what had been my wife.

Trembling, I glanced around.

The empty, neat, white bed—the toilet-table with its articles sepulchrally arranged—the formal placing of the chairs—the absence of all litter—the solemn

pureness of the snowy cloths, hung evenly about upon the furniture, and the neglected clock—stopped —silent in the presence of the dead—made my blood creep.

I paused awhile, recovering myself:—then—went toward the coffin.

The cold sheet, hanging o'er its foot, I pushed aside, and—as it slipped off—slowly—slowly—slowly—and fell upon the floor, I almost started.

Then—I took off the lid—placed it against the wall —stood, listening to my breathing—and gazed upon the moveless features—until tenderness, and madness gave me courage—and I wept.

Then, I ceased weeping and grew savage—savage with life, and death, and earth, and heaven,—with destiny, and man—with man for having spoken of her dying.

And then I doubted whether she *had* died.—

With this last thought I lived a whole half-hour in torture worse than sufferings of the damned.

Frenzied at length once more I went toward the bed —uncovered it—and thought . . . .

I'd—place the body there—and warm it.

I went back to the coffin—and could not touch it.

Another dread half-hour. Oh! she *could not* be dead! I'd try—I'd *know!*

Feeling a clammy sweat come over me, I, yet, was resolute, and raised the stark form—just an inch or two:—then—lost my power—and laid it down again.

I sat upon the tressel's end a long, long while, and wondered at the something that thus held me from my purpose, till—starting, desperately, up, I shrieked defiance to the powers of Death and Hell, and seized the corpse, and bore it to the bed.

And now all fear had vanished, and I spoke to it as though it heard me,—condolingly, encouragingly, soothingly.

At length .... "Merciful Providence!" I cried—and listened with the listening which is pain in its attention's hushed intensity.—Was it her voice again? or only my sick memory of her murmurs, sweet and low, when

she 'd slept, smiling, music-dreaming, by my side?

The hand I had released had fallen as 't were lead. The utter, hideous unconsciousness—the unresponsive, inexpressible, hard, awful mystery we only half-name when we call it 'Death' seemed there,—but I would try again.

So oft I kissed her and so long I talked—so often hoped, and was so often disappointed—that, I, at last, began to feel the kind of angry pity which we sometimes know when sick folk weary us.

Once—I'd thought I saw, as 't were, the shadow of a tremor passing over her.

And, so, I waited on, till—

* * * * * * * *

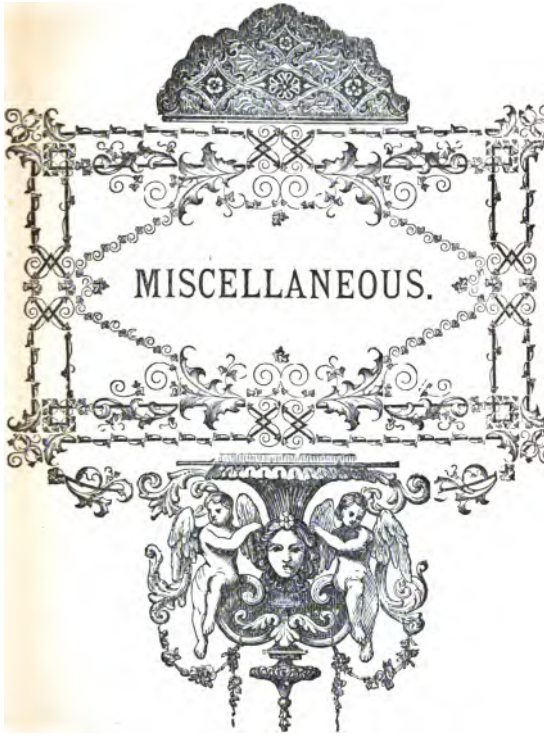
I must not think of—cannot tell—dare not remember—all the blasting, dumb, life-withering excitement of the moment when I saw the bosom heave—scarce heaving—shaken by the soul's dread struggle in the grave: —suffice it that the body moved—a little—very, very little, (a little quivering in an eyelid—the slightest motion in a finger) but lived not.

—Then—again,—again, and more—till—in an instant, as by some fiend's galvanic shock, the cold, white, rigid thing sat upright in the bed, horridly glaring from its

[illegible] concurrently as
[illegible] through error let it go
[illegible] I—man was burning!
[illegible] —and [illegible] or naught—feared
[illegible] —[illegible] —and seemed less cold!

[illegible] me. Was I doing right?
[illegible] Would not men blame
[illegible] secret? If, after
[illegible] — not punish me? I'd
[illegible] —and see it, and be
[illegible] and, just as I
[illegible] my blood! she
[illegible] —on the bed—stared
[illegible] —and saw the coffin—
[illegible]
[illegible] her—moaned, yelled out my
[illegible], horror upon horror! I heard

slow footsteps coming up the stairs, as though omniscient Justice were upon my track, and came to seek me out! and, turning, suddenly, I saw—Letitia *was not dead*, for, I was snug in bed, and she was thumping me, but—I'd had cucumbers for supper.


MISCELLANEOUS.

# MISCELLANEOUS.

## TO A BALLAD-SINGER.

How dear is thy strain! yet, how deep is the feeling
Of sorrow its melody brings to my heart!
How sad the trite truth which each note is revealing—
"With fairest delusions Time dooms us to part!"

In the days of my childhood that lay I oft chanted,
With faith, which ne'er faltered, in all that it told,—
No cares, in my day-dreams, my spirit then haunted—
Life's green was unfaded—all glitter was gold.

But gone are gay thoughts with the loud-talked intentions
Which prompted each act of my hope-colour'd years—
I sigh o'er the bliss babbling Memory mentions,
And sing but to hide or to stifle my tears.

And, p'rhaps, *thy* brief rhapsodies—once, words of pleasure—
Are heart-wailings, now, and a woe-mocking toil;—
The joy-notes of Love in thy music's glad measure
Seem marred by some misery's crushing recoil.

Receive, then, thy guerdon,—I go!—May God stay thee—
That tremulous tone but ill suits a brave song!—
Thy feelings, in spite of thy efforts, betray thee,—
And mine—are of one who has listened too long!

## TO THE RIVER LEA.

WEARY, and sad, I sit me down
Upon thy banks, sweet River Lea,
And wonder where the joys have flown
Which leave me, thus, alone with thee!

Linked with the memory of thy name
Are thoughts of friends who early fled—
To boyhood's transitory fame
Were known, but now—are with the dead,—

Of others, whose less happy lot
Hath left them still on life's dull waste,
Without one spirit-cheering spot
To greet the eye as on they haste—

And others, who, in Fortune's lap
Are lulled to soft forgetfulness
Of miseries which, hourly, sap
The hopes of millions in distress!—

—We were all *equal* once—but Time
Hath made us all *un*equal now:—
Care, scorn, pride, envy, woe, or crime
Is in each heart, and on each brow!

How sad—to think that, here, on earth,
Of all our friends few long remain—
That, from the moment of our birth,
Each pleasure 's follow'd by a pain!

—Yet—could I present keep the thought
That changes toward THE ANGELS tend,
And reckon life's brief sorrows nought,
In living, loving, for its end—

Less sadly might I sit me down
Upon thy banks, sweet River Lea,
To wonder where the joys have flown
Which leave me, thus, alone with thee!

## SISTER KATE'S ENCOURAGEMENT.

FRESH courage take:—come, cheer thee! Brooding, brother,
Over oppression maketh wise men mad!
With heart-ills intermeddleth not another—
Yet—well I know
How gloomy go
For thee the hours thou would'st have lit with glory,
Had dared thy foes thee justice to accord!—
But—wilt thou let them tell, in mocking story,
How low thou art—*thou*, who so high hast soared?

I, woman-like, have bounded my ambition
Within my home,—yet, never blamed *thy* greed
Of fame as folly! Ever-swift volition
Upward I hold to be
Time-life's reality!
Were I thee, man! no earthly power should scare me
From a grand purpose! Feeble-hearted I
Would never be, God helping, and, to dare me—
Scorn me—neglect me—should ensure my victory!

There is no life where faith is not—to sorrow
Without hope is to die!—Since the old years
When mother lured thy little heart to borrow
Her artless power to pray
"Our Father" till to-day
I have thought, ever, thou would'st ever look
And bear thee like a Greatheart!—would'st, defending
Thyself and right,—by Envy's howl unshook—
Be seen, with forward foot, unflinching, till—THE ENDING!

Lift up thy spirit! thou wilt lose, complaining,—
Sadness soars not—but, smiling, thou shalt win!
The world a weak foe is—a strong friend! Deigning
No backward glance,
On! and the chance
Is thine!—the waves of strife shall part before thee,
And, loved and honoured, thou, with aided might,
Shalt cleave thy way through crowds which now ignore thee
To where the good and brave stand out in glory's light!

## 'T IS MIND THAT MAKES NOBILITY.

In Olden times, when feudal State
Was all the daring would deem great—
When tilts were won where fair ones sate
  Rebuking imbecility—
When the stout arm was valued most,
And sturdy spirits power could boast
To rule a realm, or rout a host—
  Might seemed to be nobility!

And when, of chivalry grown tired,
The world with love of wealth was fired,
And brute-strength in the arms expired
  Of cunning and servility,—
The patient plodder who could best
Resign his claim to peace and rest,
Got Gold, or Rank, and *thus* was blest
  With what looked like nobility!

But lawless Force hath been laid low—
*Wealth's* power must meet its overthrow—
And reason, rousing at the blow,
  Shall, by her grand fertility,
Plan greatly for all good men's good—
Prove humankind a brotherhood,
And make it owned—felt—understood—
  That neither is nobility!

Look up, then, thou who art oppressed
By fools whom Fortune hath caressed,
Who have thy crushed heart most distressed
  By slander and scurrility!
Their day is past! Be Heaven adored!
The pity they 've withheld accord!
Love rule—but truckle to no lord—
  'T is *mind* that makes nobility!

## LIZZY'S 'TEA-THINGS.'

*Written with the author's Tea-cum-Supper Tray before him and his household in its 'first sweet sleep of night.'*

WHAT trifles turn the stream of thought—
These little gilded bowls have brought,
  Almost against my will,
Along life's dark and devious course,
From many a half-forgotten source,
  Soft memories, swift as still!—

The breakfast-hour—when, fresh from bed
And bath, I made, with brother Fred,
  For precedence such clutter,
And scared our sisters from their wits,
Maugre poor mother's weighty bits
  Of law and bread-and-butter!

The tea-time gathering—in the glow
Of fire-light, with the cheerful flow
  Of father's news and chat,
And stolen whispers of the fun,
In mischief, we had had, or on
  The morrow would be at!

The visit to some Madam Grim,
By half too grand and all too prim
  For urchins eight years old—
Where upright bolt I sat, and spilt
My tea, while 'daggers, to the hilt,
  She looked,' but dared not scold!

The celebration of the day
On which coz Hal had made his way
  To earth, to plague his mother—
Each pile of cake or crumpet rich
A Mount Delectable, o'er which
  I peered upon—another!

And then that afternoon when (ah!)
First introduced to Lizzy's 'Pa,'
  I sat, before the china,
More timorous than a child at school,
And looked and felt so much a fool,
  And talked like—some—*flat*—Minor!

Then, at her friend's—with sheepish phiz—
How mercilessly me would quiz
  That horrible Miss Gushes,
Who seemed to think it was such fun
To have there Lizzy's beau, brown done
  With love and burning blushes!

—But—Time hath changed all that, and she,
Dear girl! (for girl she is to me—
  I speak of Liz) hath set
Her tray for many a long-known guest,
With—bidden or unbidden—best
  Of welcomes always met!

—What varied pictures of the way
Of life, and life's wayfarers, may
  Around her board be seen,
Where cacklings and unconscious sighs,
New jokes and sad old verities,
  Wise gossips intervene!—

Young genius—dreaming of men's loud
Long plaudits, ere hath come the cloud
  (Its ardent hope to chill)
Of drear forebodings that earth's wise
And able are not oft who prize
  Or praise *another's* skill!

Some Faithful—*through* 'The Wicket-gate'—
In youth upon 'The Way'—elate—
With eloquence God-given
And beautiful unearthliness
Talking—in modest hope to bless—
About 'the bliss of heaven!'

The rich man—fain to veil with show
His secret, which so many know,
Of disappointed pride,—
His one life-lesson but, that, wealth,
Which wards some ills from laughing health,
Leaves heart-wants unsupplied!

The poor man—treating wealth with scorn—
Wealth seeking with devotion sworn,—
A leveller, 'to the core,'
Ready to risk his life to rise,—
Calling contentment grand and wise—
And wearying Heaven for—*more!*

The sage—his tea-cup's tiny wave—
A mimic-Maelstrom—stirring,—grave
And listless—slowly, round,—
Or looking up, with brightened eye,
Grand thought to utter earnestly
Upon some point profound!

And 'mid the women, with them grouped—
Wooed—wedded—widowed—gay—grief-drooped
  Or schooled to sober joy—
*One*, my small grandson's laughter shocks,
As, heedless of my whitening locks,
  She calls me, still, her "boy,"—

One who of life more, really, knows,
Perchance, than all the rest—who glows,
  In age, with love for all,
And, pleased with that of Liz for me,
Sits—listening for eternity—
  The whispered ANGEL-CALL!

But—hark!—the midnight-bell!—once more
'T is numb'ring, slow, the hour which, o'er
  My spirit, in its flight,
Some drowsy charm hath dropped—and I
Must steal to couch-dreams, quietly!
  —God grant men—all—good-night!

## THE OLD GREY HACK.

STEADY, Bob!—nay, from thy floundering race
With thyself thou should 'st fall to a firm, dainty pace:
—Thou canst not, for old age, alack!
Thou 'rt brave as thou 'rt gentle,—thy gallop's for fun,
Or to show what, in times that are past, thou hast done,—
Though small thy pretentions—no prize hast thou won—
Thou 'rt only 'Our Old Grey Hack!'

—Yet—many a weariness, sorrow, disgust,
Or vexation, of mine hast thou cast, with the dust
Of thy heels, to the winds at my back!
And many a joke, or wise word, or kind look
Had I missed—or steep glade, or still vale, or wild brook,
Or flower-gemmed, verdure-set, joy-lighted nook—
Thee wanting, my good 'Old Grey Hack!'

When somewhat 'used up,' and 'life' seems 'a mistake,'
For the coach-whirl and waggoner's whistle I make,
Where the Post-horn enlivens the track,

And notes of the song-birds and horse-bells abide,
And farmers look after their hay-loads with pride,
And sunny, smiled greetings of market-maids glide
Me after, and thee, 'Old Grey Hack!'

When rankles my thought, through some friendship estranged—
Some loved one departed—some fair prospect changed—
Some hate come my spirit to rack—
Some loss of content with myself or my lot—
Of power some smooth villain's use, or what not—
How I steal off to ride it all down, in a trot
To the fields thou well know'st, 'Old Grey Hack!'

And when friends have lauded my rhymes, with a hint—
*So* like pity!—at years that should pass ere I print,
While foes vowed for rhymes I'd no knack,
How I've pitied the pity, or laughed at ill-will,
As I've cantered away, vain enthusiast still,
To be kissed into song by the breeze on this hill
Or embraced by yon woods, 'Old Grey Hack!'

Up! Soho! Steadily!—How the scene dreams,
Here, in tableland-slumber!—the distant hum seems
(So faint-coming, o'er the expanse)

The low sigh of its Spirit—whose murmur appals,
As 'mid the lone silence it solemnly falls
On thought of the *hush* when the Death-angel calls
Our loved and lamented ones hence!

—Steady! Still steadily!—Here the road dips,
'Neath the trees, to the turn where the little bridge skips
The daisy-banked creek and cascade,—
And now rounds the hill whence the village-cots peep
O'er the small, punt-crossed river, and climbs where the steep
By the little Inn's crowned o'er which green willows heap
In broad masses their quivering shade.

—And now—we go down from 'The Traveller's Rest,'
'Mid a canopy's leaf-dropping whispers, to test,
Where it coolingly crosses the way
At the bottom, the fussy old brook's tiny force,—
—And anon—wait to look o'er the low fence of gorse
Where Pilgrims repose, at the close of life's course,
Round the House where they'd halted to pray.

* * * * * * * *

How stilly *she* sleeps—'neath her grass-covered mound
By this little lone Church—with the holy gloom round,—
Gloom which grows, as I gaze on it, black!—
—'T was hard,—oh, God! *hard!* .... *She!*—my loved
when a boy—
Who'd counsel my manhood—and fly to employ
Her frail strength to defend me, or find me a joy!—
—There—get along, 'Old Grey Hack!'

## KISSING AT PARTING.

[BALLAD]

WHEN, sad, we linger, loath to break
  Soft trammels which entwine us,
And trembling leave of fond ones take
  Who, faint, to fate consign us,
Oh, as the dread, whose words we miss,
  From dewy eyes is darting,
Can ought console us like the kiss
  We give and get at parting!

And when the loved are far away,
  And, lonely, we 're lamenting—
When hope would dream of brighter day
  But fear 't is hard contenting—
How prized 's the pain, through perished bliss,
  We feel, while tears are starting,
In pensive mem'ries of the kiss
  We gave and got at parting!

## YOU AND I, LOVE.

[BALLAD]

Let the miser deplore, as he stares at his store,
The haste he thinks wasted a coin—
To us youth's a wealth that's ne'er wasted while health
To the will to well use it we join!
So, as, gaily, we glide o'er the glittering tide
Of life from its strife to our glee, love,
I'll sing to your lute, or, we'll kiss and dispute
Whether you shall sing sweetly to me, love—
Whether you shall sing sweetly to me!

Let the aspirant rush to his goal with the crush
Of the mad and the bad as his gain—
Time's flow is a dream on a rose-coloured stream
To the fameless who'd fameless remain!
So, as spots to adore, on this stream's golden shore,
We reach, you shall teach me to tell, love,
In arbours of peace, how my heart-joys increase,
And you 'll be confessing as well, love—
And yon 'll be confessing as well!

Let the idler say 'nought's worth the toil of a thought'
Yet mumble or grumble his grief—
The trusting and true find sweet duties to do
With a guerdon beyond their belief!
So, with profit to fill up life's moments, I'll still
Seek its flowers and bowers for thee, love,
And take thy caress as reward in excess,
And live on thy fondness for me, love—
And live on thy fondness for me!

## DREAM THE DREAM THAT'S SWEETEST.

[BALLAD]

Dream the dream that's sweetest—
  Thy dream of love and life—
The dream wherewith thou cheatest
  Thy spirit from earth's strife—
Too soon stern Time will wake thee,
  A wond'rer at his flight,—
Too soon the light will make thee
  A sharer in the fight!

Dream the dream that 's sweetest,
  Unconscious, for awhile,
Life's dreaming hour 's its fleetest—
  Life's hope a dreamer's smile,—
A dreamer's smile that fadeth,
  Alas! ere well 't is seen—
Which watching Care quick shadeth
  To what hath only *been*!

## THE BILLOW-BURTHEN.

[BALLAD]

THE north-wind blew bleak, and the waters rolled slowly
Upon the bare beach where the widowed one stood
And heard the spent tempest—her ear inclined lowly—
Forth, dirge-like, pour howlings across the dark flood.

He 'd left her in sorrow—had promised to meet her
Ere set would the sun, when no more they should sever.
She shrieked—came his corse on a wave, as to greet her!—
She fell—they had met—here, were parted for ever!

## MARIE.

[BALLAD]

WEARY, restless, wretched—weeping,
Lonely, through night's lengthened gloom
Ponders my remorse unsleeping
Broken-hearted Marie's doom.

Fond was she of whom I'm dreaming
Thus, distraught, and free from guile,—
Yet, I scorned her sorrow's seeming,
And forsook her with a smile!

Spirits, o'er her tomb lamenting,
Hear me not with like disdain—
Fruitless though my dire repenting
Only death can end my pain!

## EVER-SAD.

[BALLAD]

VAINLY regretting the vanishing past—
Wond'ring how long the vex 'd present will last—
Loathing the darkness and longing for light,—
Thus do I wait for day—thus pass the night!

Envying happiness—cherishing tears—
Sighing for freedom, and fostering fears—
Longing for darkness, and loathing the light,—
Thus do I pass the day—thus wait for night!

# GROWING OLD.

[TO LIZZY, RUSTICATED]

'T is forty years since! — stay! I'll first jot down
What, now, I'm doing, . . . . at a window sitting—
A window that o'erlooks a myriad roofs
Which make the foreground of a wide expanse,
Sleeping in moonlight—with long, wooded hills
To bound the distance.
It is after midnight,
And, save that, one lone lamp, with glimmer faint
Amid the pale obscurity, suggests
The couch of anguish or the care of crime,
The world within the dwellings dead seems.
Slow—
Like ships that on a smooth, blue ocean cruise—
Small clouds are floating o'er the moon's bright track
As toward eternity.
Before the moon
Some little, dark fleece, ever and anon,
A moment lingers, with the light 't would veil
Bursting its fringes into brilliancies

By which my fancy 's from the future driven
And backward hurried, and—of one sad night
(Forgotten from its advent until now),
When, seated thus, and gazing on the sky,
My widow'd mother's sighs seemed music meet
To musings mine of father ('gone,' she 'd said,
'Beyond the stars for ever'), memory whispers
The startling words—" 'Tis forty years ago!"

Of life-years—forty!—some few full of hope;
The rest with shadow on them—marked by change
And grief—friend-deaths and withered aspirations!

Fled—forty years! And so, an hour since (forced,
And fain, to keep our girl-folk company
Amid the glitter, gaiety, and noise
Of the thronged city, o'er the hill, behind me),
The glories of the Theatre seemed paled,
And Shakspere witless, and Rossini dumb,—
And while the witching tale of hapless love
And doom romantic drew delicious tears
From gentle, wide-eyed wonder, and soft notes,
In golden showers, for ears attuned to sweets,
Fell dream-like o'er the scene, I almost thought
Such matters folly!—I am growing old!

There is a question, too, I sometimes ask

Myself, demurely, when of Time they talk
(The fond ones round me)—of its ravages
Among the joys of years Regret sees bright—
Its hopes still whispered for the days to come :
" Why do they tell me I am youthful yet,
And Pleasure's music long shall lift my step,
And age is at a distance?—in the past,
When youth was mine indeed, took love such pains
To make me think so?"—nay, I 'm growing old!

Then—oft, myself thus reasoning I find :
" They 're right—the number of one's years is nought
While health backs brave opinion of oneself.
Why—let me see!—my mother reached threescore
And ten—and some years over,—yes—of course
She did, and I bid fair to be as old!
—Her life, true! long before her Summons came,
'Labour and sorrow' was, and—at the last,
Her wit seemed lessened somewhat:—but—who knows!
I may have her tenacity of life
Without her suffering or enfeebled sense!
Why, Milton wrote the grandest song of earth
At fifty, and old Auber 's tuneful still!"
And so forth, till—I start—and, sadly, smile
At would-be youth of grey-beard wonders vaunting—
And know I 'm growing old—am growing old!

Not that, 't is difficult to die, or dark
Time's end, I 'm sad—men do not much fear death !
In youth it seems so distant ! and when trouble
Hath shook us from our dream of honoured bliss
To sense of painful, weary loneliness—
Of scorn from passers by—the hour that sees
The spirit loosened for its God-ward flight
Seems almost welcome ! But—to that faint wish
For life, so strangely lingering at its close,
And trembling into immortality,
Regrets I gather ! and, though faith may face
Its future with a smile, the dead joys lie
So sadly crowded o'er the way I 've come
That, retrospect is tearful !
Oh, when youth
But flirts with sorrow how unlikely seems
Our sinking to the ranks where discontent
And care and gloom mark man's long mutiny
Grim fate against—where moralizers scowl
At fretters for distinction—these at fools
Who whine for wealth—and all at all who crowd
The restless, wretched solitude of earth,
'Mid envy, pride, and cowardice, and crime !

But, look!—down, opposite—there! Through the light
Of the lorn street-lamp, crossing the street-end,
Something is flitting—what ?

'T is gone !—A form—
A fragile form—whose scanty, limp, light rags
Have, flutt'ring, faded in the farther gloom !

A *form* ?—that *only* ?—oh, her upturned face,
The instant that she passed, revealed a world
(A spirit-world)—All-merciful, how dread !

—We move, though myriads, to sense of sight
Automata, and, solitary, walk,
In silence loud of lonesome, crowded streets,
Unknown—unknowing !—Life—the thing beyond
The bounds of matter, moving or inert—
Is nothing, save to thought, and we, at best,
Another's being guess of from our own—
It knowing, all, here, never !
Seeking, close,
The spirit-impress on the face we see,
A smile deceives us—innocence appears
Where conscience shrinks before the pointing ghost
Of some companion in the lone wood lying,
White, blood-smeared, 'mong the dank weeds, foully
slaughtered !

Things heard no surer sign give—words are sounds
Untrusted, even with their speaker's foot

Upon the scaffold and the icy thrill
Of near, unhallowed death shot through him!
So—
That spirit is a thing apart from clods
It animates, or rocks it questions, seems
All certain! When a century hath rolled,
A woman, with a passion-full, sad face,
May pass, as now, this window: he who watches
Knowing what I of this one now know—nothing,
Save of her seeming—of the real—her soul
('The thought that is within her and about her'—
The husband sotting or the daughter sinning—
The wild son on the Waters, or herself
A mad, sick-hearted servant of vile lusts
For bread on which she asks the curse of heaven)—
Verily nothing,—she (as, glancing up
Upon the midnight ponderer, she goes,
To be, p'rhaps, on a door-step found stone-dead
In the cold grey of dawning) even less
His grave world guessing of than he of hers,—
Both, to the millions round that sleep or wake,
As not existing!—
—Yesterday, as 't were,
*I*—was not!—Strange!—'T is wondrous, stirring strange—
E'en though philosophers not mad may laugh
At the simplicity that *feels* it so!

Nay—she who wept joy-gratitude to heaven,
When I was born, that, to a man-child she
Had given birth, a few brief hours since was not!
The souls, thought, sorrows of her ancestors
Had not had being!—yet—I—*am*!—the fact
Of this existence seeming stranger far
Than passing to the *where* of Plato's wish—
Of Newton's faith—of Milton's Paradise,—
My cry for sympathy the hourly proof
I'm, here, apart from all things, and my hope
The witness I am of the unseen; soon
(Since spirit, once created, hardly dies),
While earth's last sleep upon me falls, to spring,
As dreaming, from Time's battlements, and wake
Upon the infinite, to feel the arms
Of angels bear me through a blaze of truth
To bliss for ever!

Are the fifty years
(Or nearly) I confess to, shyly, then
(Since but the struggle toward the birth, through death,
Into the deathless future), reason good
For sighing?

In the hours that may remain
For you or I, here, Lizzy, there will be
A concentration of one's being—thought
Turned inward, and a frequent upward glance—
Of beauty-loving more—of passion less—

And, with the wisdom to perceive how grow
The crowned and crushed all equal as approach
Their paths, at time's grand closing, that deep joy
In joy of others which shall wrap the soul
In beauty through the life of THE BEYOND!

Think with me, dearest, then, for love's sweet sake,
Of such youth ours for ever—and thy smile
Shall win me to all pleasures thought creates
In harmony with glad hope through the Christ!
And, while, with new-born faith in happiness,
I join the gaieties which light life's spring,
As much a boy again as be I may,
I'll deem my soul-existence but begun,
And sigh no more "Alas! I 'm growing old!"

## WHAT IS A SIGH ?

"What is a sigh?"—a sunny thought
Of childhood, clouded by a care ;
A hope to disappointment wrought ;
A lover's wish ; a sinner's prayer ;
Man's heritage ; an inward fight,
Prolonged beyond the spirit's power,—
A breath which bears the soul to light
Through the last shadow of life's hour!

## COME UNTO ME.

Come—
I know that thou art sad and very weary—
Worn—disappointed by a life care-wasted
And all resultless, and a future dreary
Which fear doth see!
Earth hath not honoured thee and time hath banished
Thy fondest hope of such a consummation!
Mocking thy toil the fruitless years have vanished,
And, verily, thou needest consolation—
Come unto me!

Oh!
Believest thou that I the heavy-laden
Am weak to help—with sorrow unacquainted,
Or loveless—I, that raised the Ruler's maiden—
Famed Calvary?
—Are not life's pleasures balanced and found
wanting?—
Can busy man afford thy plaint to listen—
World-promises of peace be aught but vaunting?—
Is 't not in heavenward glances joy-lights glisten?
—Come unto me!

Come—
As break the treacherous reeds to which thou 'rt trusting—
As with thy friends away thy pride is passing,
And thee aside the "all things new" are thrusting,
Heart faileth thee,—
And mute amid thy cares become the voices
Of men-philosophies, and charmless beauty
In which no more thy child, wife, friend, rejoices—
And strengthless is thy day, and cheerless duty,—
Come unto me!

Ah!
Think'st thou I know not how to pity weakness—
Teach courage—I, who hushed that hour in heaven with
"Lama sabachthani"—who 'd borne with meekness Gethsemane?
—Wilt thou reject my Faith because 't is gentle?
—To life's aught great without some sorrow given?
—Canst thou with *creeds* thy faint heart's tremblings mantle?
—Who 's grandly brave on earth nor trusts in heaven?
—Come unto me!

Come—
The world is scant of wisdom for thy guidance,
While simpering Folly leaves thee care-dement'ed,
Blushing vexation at each spoiled contrivance
Unblest to be!
—Wond'ring thy way, thou in the darkness stumblest
(Still to the unreal NOW, dim-visioned, clinging)—
Thy once-strong inner-life to custom humblest—
Or list'st, lethargic, Wrong's wild pean-singing—
Come unto me!

Then—
Am I not still a counsellor almighty
To him who, paralysed by care's dull wonder,
Longs, dimly, by the truth from his own pity
To be made free?
—Thy teachers trouble thee with ways past finding—
Is 't wisdom to be wise above what's written?
—Is not mere sensuous light at brightest blinding—
Man's mightiest thought by some BEYOND mute smitten?
—Come unto me!

Think—
Ere the world check'd thy gush of generous passion—

Ere dreams of heaven seemed deaths died prematurely—
With boundless God-love for thine adoration
Thou bow'd'st the knee: —
From the ethereal, now, thou'rt, hopeless, sinking!
From the TO-COME dreads, shapeless, rise around thee!
Light fearing—from annihilation shrinking—
Thou hat'st the mortal coil which, hugged, hath bound thee!
—Come unto me!

Come—
Can I not aid thee—I, who float the music
From bird-throats through the glades at golden sunrise—
Who gave the Psalm-King's lyre and mighty lyric
Their cadency—
Who called the stars from chaos and created
Soul-life—and left the Infinite, to be—
Thy Saviour?
—Come to me!

## AT EVENTIDE.

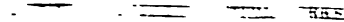
[A HYMN]

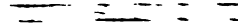
Saviour, who madest human sorrow holy—
Friend of the stricken hearts—of souls in tears,
Once more as evening darkens to Thee solely
My weakness clings, with all its doubts and fears,
To weep its troubles out upon thy breast
And 'mid thy loving whispers sink to rest!

Gently the twilight deepens,—with a splendour
Soft as the beam that led to Bethlehem
The star of nightfall me reminds how tender
When sages sought thee thou didst seem to them—
And tremblingly I come to worship too
The mystic love which thee to mourners drew!

Bear with me at thy footstool dear Redeemer—
It is so sweet communing thus with thee—
Finding my world-worn spirit's wond'ring tremor
Calmed in the hush that comes from Calvary!
Make not my crimes a cause to bid me go—
Had I not sinned should I have loved thee so?

As bend the flowers the moonlight's presence feeling—
As musically falls the breeze to sleep,
Here let me bow while thou'rt thyself revealing—
Now let my song thy solace with me keep—
And, whisp'ring where thou hast my name engraved,
Oh, wrap me in the slumber of the saved!







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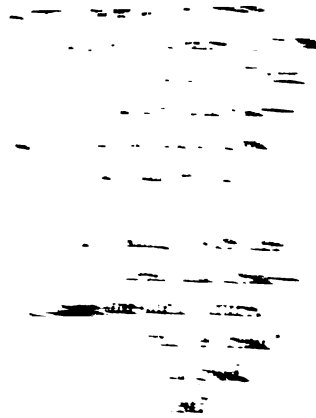

Poor, after years of endeavour—
To doubt through misfortunes still led,
And cheered by earth's cherished ones never—
Is hope in thy destiny dead ?
—Trust in the Lord, and do good,
And, verily, thou shalt be fed !

Stricken in years, and scarce heeded—
The fond ones thou lovedst all fled—
Scant succour by strangers conceded—
Dost faint on the way to THY BED ?
—Trust in the Lord, and do good,—
Thou 'lt soon by the angels be fed !

## REMORSE.

How dark is life!—how dreamy man!—
How full of change his little span
  Of care-encumber'd time!—
Griefs cloud his scene and Reason sleeps
While restless Passion flies or creeps
  To folly or to crime!

'T is but an hour in Memory's glance
Since I, a child, by choice or chance
  To guiltless pleasures ran,—
Yet—boyhood's dream and hopes which lit
My youth are gone and here I sit,
  A conscience-stricken man.

Father of all! accept the prayer
Of penitence—thy rod forbear—
  Bid me to wisdom wake—
And, while my reason soars to light,
The sin removed from mortal sight
  Forgive for Jesus' sake!

## A LABOURER'S LAMENT.

NIGHTFALL—and now a dreary road
My weary feet must tread
To find a comfortless abode
And, sleepless, strive 'gainst thoughts which goad
My heart with hunger's dread.

—Little I ask—bread, which the soil
Doth through my aid produce—
And brief cessation from long toil,—
Then, keep, ye great, your "wine and oil"—
Ye best may know their use!

But, oh, 't is hard, amid much pain
Life's needful things to lack
Till hope is but a galling chain
To bind a soul which else would fain
Leave time's bewildering track!

Oft, when my babes soft Pity bring
To plead their right to food,
Fretted by Envy's fiery sting,
I wish myself some poor, rich thing
By feeling ne'er subdued,—

FATHER, in mercy, me forgive
A longing thus impure!
Help me to still submissive live—
Till Death, by sad prerogative,
Brings succour—slow, but sure!

So, till my reason's struggling ray
Is lost in heaven's pure light,
The thought may cheer my rugged way—
'THY strength is equal to my day,
And what thou dost is right!'

## SIGHING AND SINGING.

[FRAGMENT]

* * * * * * * *

THE sighs are over, and their evil day
Is of the things which are not. I have *sung*,
Since then, the seasons in their loveliness
Of promise, fair maturity, soft wane
And stern repose—have friendly faces known
Which caught their pleasures from the pictured skies,
Or ocean-mirrors, or the varied shades
Of inland verdure—heard of mighty deeds
And grand humanity, and learned how vain
And selfish 't is to talk of one's brief woes
'Mid the world's gladness,—and, 't was e'en but now,
That, wending homeward, I espied some boys
Gathered around an ant-hill, on a bank
Where wild-flowers flourished, and thought, thankfully
—Of days when, in my childish recklessness,

From early dawn to shadowy eve I strayed
Through landscape-luxuries (now chasing things
Of magic beauty through some gorse or stream,
And then—reclining on the grass to gaze
Upon the shifting cloud-scenes or enjoy
My simple triumph over anxious ones
Who'd miss me from the busy scene whose noise,
Softened to music, came upon the breeze
To make my bliss complete)—of all the good
Reserved for all who will the Book of Life
With cheerfulness interpret,—and resolved—
P'rhaps vainly—to record my *sighs* no more!

## THE VOICES OF THE AGES.

HUSH—sweet, and low, and sad, the young-earth
voices,
Like echoes in a dream!—hark! ye who would be free!

"'Mong perfumed shades of leafy bowers, in scenes
Of sun-lit grandeur, whose green borders crowned
A steepy wilderness where Araby
Was bounded by Euphrates—at Time's dawn
A human pair lived through each smiling day
With flowers and fruits and health and harmony
And godlike thoughts and angel-visitants.
"The woman—'t is an oft-told tale—was fair,
Gentle, and grave—a well-belovéd mate.
The man was great, in wisdom,—not acquired
By precept proud, or slow experience,
But given in a moment, when he stood,
A wondering being in a wondrous world,
Just breathed on by his Maker.
"With each morn
The winds came, sporting over floral realms,

Led on by sunbeams,—and, at evening, went,
All softness, sighing, low, each still retreat
Near, songs to twilight,—leaving them from ills
Of elemental change and conflict free.
"In streams—herbs—animals—they found but strength—
Balms—beauty.—With majestic brow *he* walked,
The well-obeyed, unrivalled lord of all,
Yet, innocent,—and calmly talked with God.
"And then—the mystery.
"The Tempter is—
Was—powerful:—they fell—and peace departed.
"*Death* followed crime.
"The fearful safety sought
In union,—till Envy goaded all
To hatred.
"Then, were mighty cities raised
Of lawless spoil, and knaves immortalized
By murder; while the artist's subtlest skill
Had birth of passions—Avarice, or Pride—
Th' accursed of all curses.
"Still—men longed
Earnestly for repose,—and priestcraft feigned
Inquietude's distraction to remove,
Or disgust's lethargy—yet, promising
Philanthropy, gave fury, blood, and fire.

"Then, simple trust in lasting good was lost,—
Sages foretold it, but the multitude
Heard not, or, hearing, doubted. Doubt deferred
Relief of sickening hearts,—and misery
Left little upon earth save monuments
Of guilt and mental greatness—strangely mixed!—
To warn and nerve the nations then unborn."

The shouts of bygone ages, rolling back
In echoes! Hearken, ye who would be free!

"Waste not the present—bid the coward croak
Of evil to the tempest—thrust aside
Such as *will* blind submission—ye *are* free!
Tyrants are shrinking from the eye of Thought,
And children talk of universal love!
Cæsars abound who of all creeds would make
One peaceful empire—many a Brutus marks
Man's course with silent joy, or honest care,—
And Zoroasters, leaning on the plough,
Fulfil divine legations!
"Ye who teach—
Forget not, when your occupation's foes—
All—e'en ingratitude—against ye rise,
'How great the glory where the strife is hard!'
And ye who might be taught and will not—though
Ye reck not that with pity like contempt

Your sons will tell how little did their sires
For freedom, is it nothing that ye miss
The grand 'Well done!' of conscience? or that deeds
Of time will tint that heaven-eternity
Unto belief in which, though wits may sneer
And priests be worldly, the worn spirit clings—
A last, proud hope?—Heaven's loftiest joys are theirs
Who noblest wrought for truth and peace on earth!"

Again!—they're passing o'er us, louder!—hear
them,
Sad seekers by the truth to be made free!

"Live with the future, all who long to look
On happiness—again the scene is changed!
Childhood, which, once, oppressed by fruitless toil,
Or hopeless hunger, crouched in crowded ways,
A squalid, wretched heap, soliciting
The usurer's alms, disturbs the morning dew
With vigorous mirth—on Wisdom waits at noon—
Or rests at eve—the germ of manly youth—
Of youthful manhood!—Venerated age,
Content to stay, goes, fearless, toward the tomb!
Reason and Piety no longer jar!
Sorrow hath flown! Philosophy and Faith,
Still labouring, bridge the gulf of ignorance!

Humanity is nearer deity,
And kneels but to adore! while Science stoops
To smoothen e'en the humblest paths of life,
And Art reanimates that noiseless joy
In beauty which was deadened by The Fall!"

## BARD GIRDLE'S GREETING

### TO THE TUNEFUL POOR.

NOTING, as down the dreary vale of life,
With tottering steps, I take my toilsome way,
The wise with strong adversity at strife—
The vain of weak prosperity the prey,
Oft, leaning upon love, my staff, I stay,
The sagest counsel which my little store
Of sad experience supplies to lay
Before some woe-bewildered brother, or
To sing, as now I would, to you, ye tuneful poor!

Lovingly bear it that I thus assume
A teacher's occupation, and attend
My simple lesson.—Never 'd I with gloom
Or useless plaints the young or old offend,—
I've found this strange, hard world a truthful friend,
And, though my head is grey, and much hath care
My temples furrow'd, yet, I would not end
My brief career without a smile to spare
For those who still may find earth's morrows bright and fair.

The poet's path is pleasant, though his feet
Are sometimes weary. Providence may deal
Him out a bitter portion,—he may meet
With woes which bow the spirit (but ne'er steel
It—him—to callousness which seems the weal
Of those who think not), and—stern—Want may press
On, with the foremost of his foes, to seal
Their prejudice who deem that ill's excess
Must mar his best resolves, and make his merits less.

Yet, limited is penury's control
His spirit over—faith in good is strong,
And evil's strength is weakness,—and the soul
Which, ne'er by pained thought nerved, but tutored long
In morbid sentiment, imagines wrong
Through nature's plan would find it well to weigh
Against ill gladness—to ignore the throng
Of idle murmurers who but delay
The justice which they ask, and, blind, their cause betray.

Though 'poor and needy,' ne'er repine to see
The heartless prosper,—they may have the meed
Of diligence, their virtue, as, to ye
Fit recompense is meted.—Do ye *need*
The perishing possessions which do feed

The fool's imagination? Have ye not
A nobler heritage, in thoughts which lead
The spirit into regions where your lot
Is blessed—which make grandeur glow the ploughman's cot?

Not all are here rewarded,—statesmen miss
The power they merit—patriots, their blaze
Of glory—traders, wealth—or lack the bliss
These promised,—but the kiss of Peace still stays
The drooping heart of Honour, and Heaven's praise
For who ('mid grief, love, hope, and virtuous shame)
Would raise the mental ruin he surveys
Is certain, though no record hath his name
And great imaginings to give to future fame.

Heaven's praise and peace are sure. The many shun
Or injure him, it may be—but his pride
She, whom his careful brow and frank eye won,
To pity calms;—or, some few thinking, tried,
Brave friends he hath, who, when the lava-tide
Of maddening thought exhausts him, make him drink
*Pride*-consolation,—or, should Fate deride
*All* from his presence, he can, thankful, think
Of—mysteries which make the soulless dullard shrink.

These things remember,—He who moulds the tear
That trickles o'er the cheek withholds the good
For which ye sigh—that it is sin to fear—
That, ever, vainly have weak mortals stood
Against His wise behests!—Your plaining mood
Exchange for exultation—Truth hath burst
Her fetters! O'er the past no longer brood,
For there is reason to rejoice—the thirst
For knowledge grows, and men no longer deem man
curst!

Oh, could my utterance but make ye feel
That they of little wealth may most enjoy,
That they of much oft find gold's good unreal,
That in the poet's cup there's least to cloy,
That sighs increase what courage should destroy
(Oppression's power and poverty's distress)—
Then themes of wisdom would your harps employ
Until ye heard the hardest, e'en, confess
How song exalts the poor nor makes the rich-great
less!

But I may err in tiring, thus, your ears
With my poor modulations. Well! forgive
A bard who quavers but to calm your fears
While he may have a few short hours to live!

Who sees, with pain, the way-worn minstrel grieve,
Or marks, with thanks to heaven, his hopeful smile;
And, trusting thought will 'peace on earth' achieve,
Hears meek Faith whisper: "Yet a little while,
And all shall sing the song of—'Him who had no guile!'"

## AFTER EXCITEMENT.

When reckless pleasure meets its doom—
  When maddened mirth hath spent its noise—
How longs the spirit, in its gloom,
  For quiet hours and calmer joys!

Give me, when twilight shadows screen
  Coy Wisdom from the world's rude stare,
Some noiseless nook where I, unseen,
  May sit and sing and smile at care!

Or, let me chat with learned friend
  Of temples, thrones, books, pictures, flowers—
Cheerful and warm though wind-gusts send
  Against my window sleety showers!

Or let me, in the tranquil glow
Of sunrise, on some favourite height,
Before His altar humbly bow
Who called creation into light!

In scenes like these reflection fills
With wise content the peaceful breast,
Or God, the voice in nature, stills
Each rising murmur into rest!

## DIDACTIC.

Miser—who in hoarded treasure,
  Vainly anxious, wouldst confide,
Know—a larger, lasting measure
  Virtue doth of good provide!
Why should fear of want assail thee?
  Bread is given and water's sure!
What will unused gold avail thee?
  Will it past the grave endure?

Aspirant—whom Fame doth beckon,
  Through much strife, to prospects fair—
Higher than thy hopes we reckon
  Such as Wisdom whispereth are!
Reputation is a bubble!
  Reason bringeth solid good!
With a name come toil and trouble!
  Peace seeks humble sisterhood!

Idler—active courage wanting
'Gainst the ills which have annoy'd thee—
Still, on misery descanting,
Crying, 'No man hath employed me!'
They must want who will not labour!
Action hath no time for fear!
Joy attends not 'pipe and tabor!'
Purpose high alone can cheer!

Mourner—who by adverse waters
Hang 'st thy harp upon the willows,
Lone and sad as Judah's daughters
When they wept by Babel's billows—
Fearful things thou, pensive, viewest
In a stream of troubled gloom,—
Yet, all softest, fairest, truest,
Brightest forms around thee bloom!

Oh! shall Folly still enchain ye,
Children of celestial birth?—
Hers are all the ills which pain ye!
Wisdom makes a heaven of earth!—
War with passions! work for blessings!
Wait in hope till life shall cease!
Then, forgiven your transgressings,
Ye may go away in peace!

# SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE.

On this green earth—this should-be paradise
Through which, life-weary, mourning in his plaint,
Man goes to his long home—grow two dark weeds—
Bitter and baneful—apathy and envy—
Which, gathered in his morbid recklessness,
Oft paralyze his loftiest resolves
Or make him with unholy passions mad.

The Christ-law's love—no happiness thou know 'st
Save by participation. Sympathy
Must be thy social bond, and selfishness
Be left to Doubt (affecting honesty
In finespun systems), and thy nerves must thrill
With indignation at the legal crimes
Of proud oppressors, or thy heart must swell
With joy that Justice triumphs while thy will
Doth aid to smooth their paths who toil along
Life's byways (bearing fruits and flowers to such

As get, but earn not) if thou'd'st alway look
Without a blush or frown upon thy fellow,
And know of honour's peace—or Christ-claimed heaven!

The gay who 've no communion with the flowers
But *prate* of roses! and the moralist
Who ne'er for others weeps but *cants* of woe!
Hence, they who'd, true to nature, balmy drops
Of consolation into soul-wounds pour
Of care-racked suff'rers—who would love the young,
Fair, innocent's fresh, uncorrupting mirth—
Should meet (when summer forth comes with the light
And life which do accompany green fields,
The hum of insects, songs of birds, fair skies,
Glorious sun-risings, rosy evenings—calm
In their deep grandeur—renovated hopes
In human hearts, and smiling plentitude)
The winds and waters, in their solitudes
By pebbly shores or forests, and inquire
Of them their counsel when each wave that leaps
Toward heaven (as rushing onward) speaks of powe
In soaring sympathies, while rivulets,
Pursuing their lone courses, fill the woods
With music, or refresh the sward, and tell
Of humble usefulness, and breezes come,
Like spirit-voices, through the foliage

Which wraps some shadowy scene, to bless and teach
Their blest the bliss of blessing!
Thou, whose tried
And loved retreats have been the mountain-tracks,
The banks of rivers, the untrodden brakes,
And shores of roaring oceans, know'st full well
The truth I sing—nature's omnipotence
To lift a man above the valley's clod,—
Oh! whisper it, low—kindly—cheerly—oft—
To hearts that know it not,—and when the leaves
Are sere and scattered, and chill blasts proclaim
Approaching winter, and thou moralisest,
'Mid desolation, on time's brevity
And human vanity, and, pensive, seest,
In some cold sunset, life's late-autumn eve—
The memory of thy deed, while angels smile,
Shall bring thee pleasure to which vain applause,
Or blood-stained trophies of fooled conquerors,
Are trifling as a moping idiot's dream!

## TO ——

### WHO HAD WORKED UPON A PERFORATED CARD, THE SENTENCE "MEET ME IN HEAVEN."

ALREADY? Hath *thy* heart, then, in the strife
Of deadly passion, beaten painfully?—
Already dost *thou* ponder o'er the sod
Which hides loved kindred, though their sainted forms
Are seen by thee, amid thy daily cares,
As shadows, through the mist of memory?—
Or, doth thy thought *so* soon track spirit-paths,
(Feeling this earth is not our all), that, thus,
Thou dost remember Heaven?—Or, were these words,
(So tastefully inwrought) but choiced by thee
As one mere prettiness—a pensive phrase
Of lady-world refinement?

If thou 'rt *pained*
At marking man's low-thoughtedness—at seeing
Soul-power's prostration—know, that, every pang
Thou bearest may give nerve to act thy part
In life's great purpose—energy to seek
Truth's blessedness.

If those thou lovéd 'st most
Are gone, and every grave-mound seems to thee
A plunderer's lair, o'ercharged with horrid spoils,
And *unheard* voices, in complaining strains,
Bid thee shun earth-allurements, and adorn
Thyself for heaven . . . . Remember—life, if dull
As a December day, is, like it, brief,
And that, to work and wait with cheerfulness
And patience till the Voice which made and called
Earth 'good' gives Rest is wise.

If knowledge lights,
And great example leads, thee, and thou knowest
To shun the errors of the earnest ones
Who have o'erlooked time's fairest things while seeking
The hidden wonders of eternity,
I give thee joy: but—Heaven—if 't is to thee
Only a power by which deep passion swears,
A place of which the many (whom much woe

Hath left unwise) say, oft and thoughtlessly,
'We there shall meet,' a something adding grace
To woman's conversation, a soft dream
Relieving stern reality—forget
Not *its* reality,—for, every bud
Which opens at the first warm breath of spring—
Each leaf that rustles in the ruder winds
Of autumn ere it falls to swell the mass
Of sombre carpeting (fit garniture
For solemn solitudes!)—ay, all which hath
Existence (from the insect's egg, enclosed
In some frail web beneath some little leaf,
To man's strange power of thought)—through discontent,
And yearnings for the light, and change, and growth,
Proclaim that nothing dies and that Heaven is,—
And, since 'tis worth a deathless spirit's seeing,
We must not, you and I, *forget* to go!

## ALL THINGS ARE CHANGING.

ALL things are changing—from the cities heaped
Beneath the waters or the sand-waved plain
To daily thoughts and feelings, folly-steeped
In colours false of pleasure and of pain!
Tyrannic passions, leagued for horrid gain,
Hell's ready tools, have devastated earth,
Soft quiet chasing from the brow and brain,
For ages—have borne all of mortal birth
From toys to misery—from mis'ry to mad mirth!

Childhood will ope at morn a smiling eye
And quench ere eve the glowing orb in tears!
Youth spurns the past, nor knows futurity
Will dim its brightness with the rust of years!
Manhood is rife with change it hopes or fears—
With grief for friendships riven by the faults
Of others or ourselves—for icy sneers
Of silent foes—at which the spirit halts,
Perchance 'mid gay pursuits, to arm 'gainst foul assaults!

Age, which we call 'The calm that ends life's storm'—
'The tomb of hopes unfounded,' or 'The goal
Where loit'rers win,' though fading in the form
Of rest, lacks rest's reality!—each knoll
Impels the sere still onward, with control
Strange, stern, unlimited, through sleepless thought
Of that last hour when weeping ones condole
With those departing—when distinctions bought
With years of toil—wealth, wisdom, friends, power, fame, are—nought!

## LIFE'S SHADOWS.

YOUTH well may cheerly take its place
For life's day's journey—'t is to find
Its morning light on every face—
Nor note each traveller's *shade*—behind!

And e'en where, midway, we entomb
Hopes immature and memories sweet,
Some, strong in thought, may smile at gloom
Then circling closer round their feet,—

But when the golden noon is o'er,
Though willing still the way to brave,
Our shadows, stretching on before,
The passage darken toward the grave!

## OUT OF THE DIN.

ESCAPED!—once more—upon a nightfall calm—
To roam, away from toil and strife, alone,
Where waters ripple soft through rural haunts
Whose every voice in numbers gently-sweet
Speaks poesy, or seek the brambled tracks
Where woodland eventides are rarely woke
Save by the hymn-notes of the nightingale
Pausing earth's low-breathed thanks and silent
prayer!

Forth—thus—more often should one steal to gaze
On mountain, vale, and sky-world, when the Sun
Sinks crimson-couched, and, drowsily, all life—
E'en to the insect hovering o'er the brook—
Hums his departing glory—for 't is then
The voice of Truth's most heeded and the heart
Cons gentlest lessons,—easiest 'tis, then,
To think one's foe one's fellow—and the breeze
That cools hot temples, and brings melody
And incense, banishes each narrow thought,
And whispers to the warring passions—'Peace.'

## TO ———

### WHO HAD SAID: "ALL BEAUTY IS IDEAL."

CAN it be so?—is beauty 'but ideal—
A passing fashion—Fancy's vain excess—
A cheat—a mockery—a thing unreal
As childhood's dream of future happiness?'—
Nay—'tis *not* truth!—'tis blasphemy to me!
I hate the cold and melancholy creed,
And such words scarce can pardon, e'en in thee—
Though uttered with thy wonted want of heed.

For *thou* hast, in thy life's course, seen in night
Sublimity, and, in the day's still dawn,
Grandeur, and, in the gathering tempest's might,
Wild mystery, and, on the breeze-fanned lawn,
Softness and grace—seen deep, huge shadows lie
Upon the landscape while sweet rest was creeping
The sun's realm o'er, and marked the love-lit eye
When to the rainbow from the rose 't was sweeping!

And such things—known to thee as widening out
Hope's vision of the earth-peace and the great
And golden destiny of the devout
With Deity—forbid that thou abate
Aught of thy faith or worship of their Cause,
Or brand thee recreant to that belief
In the grand Unseen which thy heart's applause
Hath told thee, oft, is strength in life's long war
with grief!

## TERRA ET CŒLUM.

BROTHER—in life's cold, hard campaign, hast thou
Been forced to pitch thy tent with Poverty,
Humiliation, Ignorance, or Vice ?
Hence hast thou sighed for riches or renown ?
And, lacking what thou hast long'd for, hast thou read
Of resignation, and yet felt it not ?—
Throughout thy weary, fruitless, fretful marches—
Thy enterprises, haltings, and strange paths
Hath Fortune played thee foul, and worried thee ?
—She's call'd, here, 'fickle—foolish,' and men loudly
Talk of her shameless treachery,—but then,
In heaven, thou know'st, her name is Providence,
And He who into its existence hurled
The whirling universe directs each step
She takes while wandering in the ways of men.
—Gold's glitter fades ; renown is nothingness ;
Possession's disappointment ; and the chase

Of maniac ambition hath no end :—
And at life's battle-close THAT HOUR may come
And find thee pillowed safe (though worn) on peace—
While spirit-voices, calm, and soft, and sweet
As evening winds that murmur promises
Of sunny morrows, full of blessedness,
Whisper, 'Through Him thou 'st conquer'd,' and, Oh, then—
Eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard, nor hath
It man's heart entered what, for all who 've faith,
The Christ-love hath prepared beyond 'the Bourne!'

## MORNING.

STILLNESS—and solitude—and mystery.
—No sound—no moving form. Passion and Peace,
Both, cradled by Death's solemn sister, Sleep.
—Nor night—nor day. Shapes, undefined, half-looming
Through the dun, star-besprinkled, twilight.—Hush!
—Nature is faintly smiling—like a child
That dreams of joy to which ere long 't will wake.

* * * * * * * *

The dawn hath broke!—'T is morn!—The lower edge

Of yonder rising cloud is fringed with gold!—
The East's in flames!—See see! the day-god comes!
Oh, in what majesty! Hail, gorgeous power—
Heaven's witness of earth's bliss—man's hope—time's glory!

* * * * * * * *

Now, all is mirth. The light is on fresh lawns,
And dew-bespangled flowers, and lovely lakes
In which blue skies are mirrored—making sport
With shadows, among glens and shrubberies
And hedgerows, far away, adown the slope
From whose green summit I survey them. Birds,
In merry outbursts, fling upon the breeze
Their minstrelsy; and, hark! from the lone village,
Embosomed in yon valley girt by woods
Whose foliage, in fantastic masses, breaks
The bright horizon, comes the clarion shrill
Of some gay house-cock, bringing welcome thoughts
Of cottage homes, where the stout serf whose axe
Rings in the neighbouring thicket, and the maid
Who passed but now with milken beverage,
Humming her rustic ditty, and their kind,
Dwell on in peace!

How beautiful is life
To such as walk with quiet through their course !
Here, oft as this enchanting hour returns,
Would I forget the strife which steals our rest—
The vague ambition which makes time a dream !

Angel=Beckoned.

# ANGEL-BECKONED.

## A Monologue,

WRITTEN IN THE FITZROY GARDENS, MELBOURNE.

---

No *past*—it hath no past, this place,—
Nothing to chronicle a race
  Which, here, hath loved and died ;—
No memories ;—no romance, to stir
Its solitudes ;—no voice, to spur
  Ambition's brooding pride ;—

Nought but the present.—Yet, it looks
Like a thought stol'n from story-books,
  And charms like some old ditty ;—
And sometimes, as in peace it lay,
At sunrise (here, with new-mown hay—
There, stretching, through soft shades, away)—
  A leaf-formed Fairy-city—

I've watched it, from its smiling dream
Awaking, in the golden gleam,
  To breezes sweet, that shook
Its feathered Choir to early praise,
And could have lingered all my days
  Upon its charms to look.

I've seen how, here, the noon hath sent
The sick and weary-hearted—bent
  On shade and solitude—
To smile, and dream—in some green nook
Half-hidden p'rhaps—o'er Nature's book
  Of universal Good.

—The gay come here to greet the flowers—
The grave to lengthen out the hours
  Ambition makes too fleet—
The aged the little ones to bring,
And feel the greensward once more spring,
  Like youth, beneath their feet.

The Sabbath-groups with pleasure throng—
Glad music of the Matin-song
  Remembering—to its bowers,—
At e'entide leave its balmy air
And carry to the House of Prayer
The scent of summer-flowers.

But most of all its peace I feel
When sounds upon the air reveal
  The city's sultry strife,
Reminding me how wild's the wave
That sweeps Ambition t'ward the grave
  Along the Sea of Life.

—Hark!—from the temple, on the hill,
Rich strains, that through the memory thrill,
  Are stealing down the slope,
Filling the sun-striped glades with sounds
At which the fainting spirit bounds
  To life again, and hope!

—And that meek Maid—who'll lay her head
Beneath the turf she now doth tread
  Ere the next snowdrops peep—
Pauses to listen—with her soul
More softened to the beautiful
  As nearer to—HER SLEEP:—

Then, as the music ceases, seeks
A seat, where, through the sunny weeks,
  She daily hath reclined,
And sits her down with tottering care,
And turns her hectic cheek, so fair,
  Unto the cooling wind.

—Hid by yon branch which spans the path
Comes one, grown old, who also hath
  A feeble step and slow :—
Into this avenue he wound
From where the wattle-glooms abound
  A little way below.

—And now we see him, halting half
His time, as, often, with his staff,
  He turns aside the grass
Where peep the flowers he scarce can bend
To pluck to carry to his friend—
  A daughter's little lass.

Grey is his head and fresh his face
And glad his eye and soft the grace
  Which goodness gives his age,—
A cheerful man, who reads aright,
At length, by some imparted light,
  On life's bewildering page.

—Look!—through the underwood he breaks—
His seat beside the Maiden takes,
And, with a freedom sage,
By some kind commonplace, dispels
The silence that in strangeness dwells,
Her gossip to engage.

* * * * * *

"Much grieved am I that you are ill,"
He says (in talking of the will
Of Heaven, with mercy rife)
"Yet—you'll get well. *I*'m 'scant of breath,'
But mine's a sickness unto death—
I'm ill of a long life.

"Come, you must cheer up! Not for long
You'll ail, we'll hope! In healthful song
Your gratitude you'll vouch
When my unworthy name's forgot—
When, e'en, the night-wind whispers not—
'Forgotten'—o'er—MY COUCH."

—"'T is not for long, 't is true, this pain,"
She answers, smiling, "but, 't were vain
To hope 't will end in health;
It is too long since first I knew
Its touch:—'t was gentle—but it grew—
And baffled us through stealth.

"'Us,' say I, for it renders sad
My loving kindred, who'd look glad
When I am by, and brave;
Yet know t' will me full soon destroy,
And see on all they should enjoy
The shadow of my grave.

"The Great Old Land that gave me birth,
Where bravery's bred and luckless worth
Is entertained in ruth—
The spot whence God the gauntlet hurled
Bidding us stand against the world
For Liberty and Truth,

"Britain! the tyrant's hate! the love
Of every aspirant above
The robber-creed of might!
Whose glory lit my natal-day!
Was not to see me pass away
To death's mysterious night.

"The air that freshed my sister's cheek
And nerved my brother's boisterous freak
Friends counselled me to fly,—
The promise of an April day—
The harebell, trembling by the way—
Were not more frail than I.

"Well I remember, one bright morn,
Returning whence my father 'd borne
My case for counsel skilled
And noting how his whisper paled
My mother's cheek—how sighs prevailed:
And how *the house was stilled.*—

—"And then—we fled.—They wept their flight—
Tear-dimmed loved scenes which from their sight
Seemed sinking in the sea,—
And turned to face, with purpose stout,
A future, here, o'erfull of doubt
For waning ones with me.

"Fast in her glittering wake the foam
Our good ship flung, and—we 'd a home
Without the freezing blast;
And all seemed well:—but, ah! too late!
They've but deferred awhile a *date*
They 'll early write at last!"

"Permit me" he replies (as led
To deeper sympathy, his head
He bows, in serious thought)
"To add to the regret I spake
My joy that such wise use you make
Of knowledge sorrow-fraught.

"Less in your words than in their tone
To me the victory 's made known
Which o'er Despair you've won
With courage Heaven doth oft dispense
To hearts which *feel* that time and sense
Are going, or, are gone.

"Fooled by the world, few see life's hour
Is wasting,—still for wealth, or power,
Its peace we wildly spend,
Or—startled—finding it hath past—
Though settled to our fate at last—
Too sadly face The End.

"And, so, 't is well God's finger-trace
Of grave Experience the place
To Youth e'en can supply:
For, in some way, who'd know *no* fear
Must *realize* All fleeting, here,
And ready be—to die."

"But, see you nothing, save this fear,
That saddens life ?" she says—"the tear
  Of helpless, vain regret—
Who hath not marked it—doth not know
The bitterness with which 't will flow
  In paying memory's debt?—

"So long I've haunted this Domain,
That, to be absent 's almost pain :—
  Its peace is, in my heart,
To home-loves joined ; and I could smile,
Though but for *it*, on earth awhile—
  For it could, pained, depart.

"And do you wonder?—Can the scene—
Yon mighty Bay's mast-chequered sheen
  Fleece-bordered on the sky—
Those Palaces—the Mountain-line—
The deep blue Heavens, and this green Shrine—
  Be seen with apathy ?

"Are mine the only eyes that see
Such wealth of form-felicity,
  Impassioned, or, at rest,
In nature, or the mind of man,
As makes the spirit with earth's span
  Imagine itself blest ?

"Look at yon Gladiator's dash
To meet and ward the murderous crash !—
How genius can sever
The brute from beauty !—some Unknown
Hath struck the moment into stone—
'A thing of joy for ever!'

"Where, o'er yon moss-rimmed, darkling pool,
The Fountain-waters, shadow-cool,
Their pensive murmurs leave,
So fair a chiselled form is found—
We ever after look around
At every fount, for Eve,—

"While matchless Art (in marble Shells,
Fruits, Flowers), at every point, compels,
Along the graceful Past,
Rapt fancies, which the Sculptured Fair
Around us, smiling, seem to share !—
Greece triumphs to the last!

"Oh, earth, to others, as to me,
Is beautiful! and can we be
Content to pass away ?—
Is it not grand to contemplate
Man, struggling t'ward th' Immaculate—
Deathless amid Decay ?"—

—"Yes; but the struggle tells of change"—
The old man says—"for all full strange.—
Ah, well may Art seem slow,
Since every faultless thing it finds,
Or dreams, is Heaven-marked, and reminds
The dreamer *he* must GO!

"I hold not we should long to flee—
I feel not we ourselves can free
From nature-ties of time:—
But, thinking of the God-sent thought
Of supernature, whence Greece caught
Her glimpse of the sublime,

"I hear the dungeon-lesson's roll,
O'er Athens, from the mighty soul
Of Socrates, begun;
And witness in how grand a way
His going teaches us to say—
'T is well: HIS WILL BE DONE.'"—

"Enough, enough!" she gently cries,
With tear-suffused, yet smiling, eyes,
And frankly-offered hand,
As (where upon the grassy bed
The shadow of an Urn is spread)
She, risen, now doth stand,

"The sun-light's *in* yon thicket now—
Scarce *on* it;—rich, oblique 's the glow
That warns toward repose:—
So, life-light, but, at noon, a beam
That gilds the head, to glance, doth seem,
*Within* us, at the Close.

"Good-bye!—er—do I say amiss
'Till our next gossip?'—thanks for this."
—"Don't stir for me!" she adds—
But, rising, he prolongs the talk,
A little way with one to walk
Whose tone his spirit glads.

—And, so, they go, in weakness strong,
Up yonder path—around, along
The branchy avenue,—
And, at the Wicket, on the hill,
As soft as sere-leaf-fallings fill
The valley, say—"Adieu."

How artless their pretence to part
Cheerly though hope is in each heart
By sad forebodings met!—
As, grave, he watches, from his nook,
Her lessening form, she *feels* his look,
And sighs him back regret.

* * * * * *

And oft in her accustomed place
He, after, seeks her soul-lit face,
  Or wakes each green retreat
In hope to find her (where increase
The silent shadows) full of peace,
  Upon some rustic seat;

Or peers among a cheerful crowd
Where, by the little bridge, aloud
  The water 's leaping down
To wind away 'tween fragrant banks
The rustlings of whose reedy ranks
  Its dying ripples drown,

Until—he finds that she hath fled,
BECKONED BY ANGELS, where 'the sped'
  To blessedness are given—
Hath left Time's hour of tears and mirth,
And, while he looks for her on earth,
  Upon him smiles from heaven.

* * * * * *

And still I meet him—halting half
His time—as, often, with his staff,

He turns aside the grass
Where peep the flowers he scarce can bend
To pluck to carry to his friend—
A daughter's little lass.

# Married in Black.

# MARRIED IN BLACK.

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## NEW YEAR'S EVE.

Because I still must sing, on life's dark way,
'To keep my courage up,' though few may hear—
Because, while Silence holds her solemn sway
Along the lonely Bourne I hourly near,
Thought should be grander than my heart conceives
And utterance sweeter than my fancy weaves,

I linger o'er the prelude of my Song,
And yearn for power, and tremble to begin,

And wonder whether, my lone path along,
Some listener, whom I see not, I may win
To bend an ear attentive to my lay
Of Love, Hate, Death, and Night and jocund Day.

'There is a path which no fowl knoweth'—entered
At Time's profound 'NO MORE'—and leading whither
'The needy shall not alway be forgotten,'
Nor 'the poor's expectation perish.' Thither
Man's mournful spirit learns to look and see
Its 'discontent is immortality'—

While many a hallowed custom marks its lore,
And many a way-sign cheers it when depressed,
And many a heaven-thought, acted, 'mid the roar
Of wrongs and retributions, tells of rest,
And Providence is trusted, and Faith wings
Its passage onward, hoping holier things.

And, so, upon a New Year's Eve, a bell
Of grey St. Jude's is tolling, deep, and slow,
Its sad note through the moonlit air to tell
The Old Year's dying, to the vale below,—
While from the Church stained lights o'ergleam the ground,
And sweetly sleeps the silvered scene around.

Within the Church green boughs are wreathed—and
flowers
Are garlanded about the pillars, pews,
And screens. A mass of foliage embowers
The organ-nook whence choristers diffuse,
The aisles among, low breathings, holy all
As hymns at eve in Eden ere the Fall,

And—hushed—the throngs, with still, uncovered heads,
Awe-bowing toward the Altar—in the light
(Leaf-shadowy, shimmering) the roof-lamp sheds—
Await the thrilling stroke which knells NOW 's night
Into THE UNSEEN'S morrow.
Hark!—'t is o'er!
And that year's pain or peace they 'll know no more!

* * * * * *

Merrily, now, the New Year's birth is rung!
The bell-notes seem to tumble from the tower,
And frolic o'er the plains—far hills among
(Whence woodland cots peep, white) their joy to
shower—
Where the shawled farm-wife braves the midnight
chill—
Lured to the lattice—charmed—and listening still!

And, from the worshippers, hope, loud, harmonious,
(In quick, grand, cheerful chorus chanted) breaks—
And gratitude, with tenderness euphonious,
Low, firm sung, in the descant meek rest makes,—
And youths and maidens chat beneath the porches;
And minstrels flush the streets with needless torches!

* * * * * *

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## WAR.

"No deadness, Luke—no dreariness which bows
The spirit of society—no want
Of action, life, excitement—no false vows
Or truth to true ones—no grand end—no rant
Of poets, priests, or princes—can make war
A thing to wish, permit, or pardon, more!

"Look o'er the sickening past! Hark how the roar
Of human conflict, paused by hissing gusts
Of hate and rumblings of revenge, storms o'er
The desert, TIME, where Virtue, with her trusts,
Sinks, gasping her last protest to the skies,
'Neath an o'erwhelming weight of agonies!

"See!—*calmly* can you?—passion *need* not here
Perception quicken—'t is, alas! too plain!
The City's night-fall is awake with fear!
God's light hath gone, but man's doth glow again
With horrid brightness where the breathing cower
Among the breathless—hiding from the hour!

"All day have thunders (belched from iron throats
Of engines dire which man's hell-thoughts invent)
By piles of Art (man's heaven-thoughts), in harsh notes,
Been answered with like thunders, as domes went
Crashing to ruin in the quivering streets—
Of helpless crowds the awful winding-sheets!

"And men have hurried, with blanched cheeks, and eyes
Mad wonder glistening, and wasted limbs,
Bearing about faint women, through wild cries,
From danger to destruction!—while growl'd hymns
To Murder drowned the whining infant-plaint
Upon dried breasts of mothers mad and jubilant!

"At their stored riches, burning, black, to earth—
O'er corpses called but yesterday their heirs—
Grey, thrifty sires have laughed, in maniac mirth
More fearful than their last-night's howl'd despairs—
While girls sobbed blasphemies, or cursed the lie
That 'safe' called innocence and purity!

"The harlot, ragged thief, and homicide
Have flouted the dummed preacher—have hands shaken
With scared Respectability, and sighed
And asked, demure, whence to-day's 'text' was taken:—
And Faith hath, 'mid the ruins of the cell
And sanctuary, muttered—'*Is* it—*well*?'

And, now, where'er the flickering light and shade
In the red picture forms some smoke-gloomed spot,
Strange deeds are done, and here and there feasts made
Of which their vilest miscreants whisper not,—
For, *Famine* hath been, long, the master-foe
In that unutterable hell of woe!

—"What's yonder?—there?—beyond the smouldering heap
O'er which the blue flame's lambent?—that dark nook,
And still group, famishing? How each doth keep
Upon the rest his trustless, treacherous look,
With simulated calmness!—What shall give
The food each there must have to longer live?

—"God of the helpless!—look! a mother sits
And turns away her vacant, tearless eyes
While her babe's slaughtered! and—but time permits
No ending of the horror, for, the skies
Are suddenly aglare with burning death,—
And all stand staring, dumb, with bated breath!

"The blazing homes, the blinding dust, the crush
Through ways blood-slippery, the startling yells,
The deafening shouts, the rattle and the rush
Of the beleaguers, with the bursting shells,
And one dread blast that upward through the core
Of all its way doth rip, and—all is o'er!

"Over the gore-grimed victors' lusts and rage—
And heaps all pestilent of vanquished dead—
A vapory veil is hung,—and one dark page
Is added to the past—so little read
Save to forget the present, or learn hate,
And keep the nations unregenerate!"

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## GUSTAVE.

"Nay, Tom, you're earnest, now,—I had not thought
To rouse you thus,—than you no more this game
('Tween titled miscreants played—with placemen bought
To dupe and deck for slaughter men we name
By millions) love I,—yet, lad—is not wrong
The pith of life's romance—the burden of life's song?"

"Not always, Luke."

"Well—p'rhaps, not always,—but,
With other themes in view, I meant to say—
From history-associations shut
So sadly out, here, fancy hath no play,
And thought seems narrowed to the hourly care
For power to fly to crowd-life—anywhere."

—"'The mind is its own place—our hell, or heaven,
Ourselves we make—ourselves the greatest hell,'
You know, Luke.—Alway, life hath in't its leaven
Of passion and romance. The Old Years tell
Their story to the New ones in all places,—
To Thought the New ones come with wrinkled faces.

"That Youth and Maid, *in black*, just through the bright
Church vestibule, against a pillar leaning—
You see them?—Well! they mind me of a night
Of long ago, amid the moonlight-sheening
Of frosty Christmas-time—a Christmas Eve
In England—at a place called—'Springleaf,' I believe.

"In such a church, at such a time as this,
Against a pillar leaning, folk like these,
In black garbs habited (nor garbed amiss
For such a scene where solemn garbs most please),

Were by our friend Gustave once pointed out
To me as two sad souls to sing about.

"We were upon our way to see Adéle—
His lovely sister, you remember.—Well
He knew our halting-place, and many a tale
Of its unnoted habitants could tell,—
And told me of a plot whose ending rare
Had wrought those 'mourners' evil past repair.

"Gustave, you know, was young,—was like all youth
Before the heart gets hardened and the brain
Is by heart-selfishness bewildered. Truth
Pleading 'gainst Wrong to him ne'er prayed in vain.
He'd not yet tried to think the poor's plaint nonsense
To please his friends or satisfy his conscience.

"As up to hear the midnight-choir we went
He had been talking politics with all
The fire you knew him guilty of.—He bent
His mind toward the music slowly.—Small
Was his attention, too, to my request,
Made, after, for his Story, as his words confess'd,

"For, muttering, as oft his wont (like one
Who had been unwise—solitary—wronged—
Repentant—ere we knew him), he went on
Abstractedly reflecting, and prolonged,

With thought half-relevant and broken, thus
My willing waiting for a Love-tale, by . . . .

* * * * * *

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## HOW GUSTAVE BEGAN.

"Hours go,—men sigh,—God calls,—Sin laughs,—
Prides fail;—
And wearied crowds, through Christ, find rest in
heaven:—
A hope, a disappointment, and a wail,
With help for whoso will, 's the history given,
Ever, of spirit-life, to man, in pain,
Sinking, resigned, unto the dust again.

"The griefs of others furnish the romance
Which is but med'cine 'gainst our own despair,—
The weal that ends of many a wondrous chance
The story but reminds that—woe was there;—
Woe's cure's but noting greater woe's degree,—
And hope of mirth's but proof of misery.

* * * * * *

"To heaven, through midnight depths of mystic light,
The record of man's wants, now, angels bear,
Charging winged sisters, watchers of the night,
Concerning blessings, in the whisp'ring air,—
Till—Silence wonders whether dawn will be
Where To-day's dying—in Eternity.

* * * * * *

"At once, two days were never looked upon!
*What—where*'s TO-MORROW?—in the fool's brain hidden?
A *lie* upon the Calendar, so done
That sanity to see it is forbidden?
The echo of a fiend's laugh, *outside* NOW,
Listened by Discontent, with wrinkled brow?

—"Yet, for *this* cheat, we crumple or cast out
The joy-flowers of the present, and make life
Vanity and vexation—find a doubt
In fair reality—turn peace to strife—
Ignore the scents and colours at our feet
And 'Barren, barren!' cry, with sad conceit.

'Where is the power with which, as with a wand
Of magic, I touched moments into bliss,
Or held each laughing Hour, in struggle fond
For one more song-inspiring, passing kiss,

While Youth and Love clapped hands, and called
'Come! see!'
To artless Hopes which ran with vigorous glee?

—"Is 't a dark day that teaches, through first sorrow,
'The past' means 'sadness?'—there's a darker still—
When from the hidden future first we borrow,
The Now to wildly blast, our restless skill,
And learn to miss, like Eve, good each *may* know,
In grasping a To-come which tortures so!

—"My life-path hath been lonely,—I've endured
Alone—alone have consolation sought,—
Alone shall go to THE ACCOUNT—ere cured
Of sin and sighing—for, my fate hath wrought
But unapproaching pity,—men do fear
To see the gloom they know too well—too near.

"Though tears of rapture often o'er my cheeks
Will well forth freely, yet, my feeling's play
Is vague as are the bell-chimes Fancy seeks—
Ringing soft music—solemn—far away:—
The heart-home is not nearer, and I share
The worn rest-seeker's wonder, looking—where?

"Yet, knowing, now, my unprized happiness
Was once too great for any mortal lot—

That, what is may be best—I grieve the less
O'er life's conditions,—nay, e'en murmur not
Among my fellows,—but await His call,
Gravely, to go and comprehend it all:—

"For, though in our 'to-day' unanxious thought
Is wisdom—fit that for itself should care
'To-morrow'— the Beyond *is* mystery-fraught
To all that's mortal—ever—everywhere,—
And the Now shrinks to nothing in the ken
Of spirit questioning the awful—THEN!

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## MORSDELL HOUSE.

Two miles—or less—from here
There lies a road so grand in forest-gloom
It might have Christian's path to Heaven been.—Year
By year the crowded, mighty trees, for room,
To heights stupendous, either side the way,
Have climbed up silently—and shut out day.

There—'t is perpetual twilight;—music, there,
Made for all fantasies, lives ever—bird-

And-breeze-created ;—in its mystic air
The herd-boy lags behind his crawling herd
With reverence and wonder ;—there Time dreams—
As moveless—in a hush that changeless seems.

Journeying that road you'd pass, at length, a way
Which goes up northward toward a gleam of light
Where green-and-gold of grass-and-sunshine play
Upon a breezy upland, round the site
Of one grim-gated, grey, vast, tower-like Home.
The way itself is gloom,—a realm for monks to roam.

—One eve—in summer (through a narrow stream
Of moonlight, straying slantwise from a glade
O'er that lone route)—a man (as in a dream
A shadow glides) passed up toward where the shade
Majestic of the leaf-roof darkled down
To blackness and conceal'd him 'neath its frown.—

—A lapse of minutes :—then—another went—
Through that streaked moonlight—hurriedly.

The *first*
Was Herbert Vaughan, a youth almost, who bent
His steps toward Lelia Auford, who'd been nursed
And reared by Widow Morsdell, in dull state,
Beneath those battlements—within that grim, old gate.

The *follower* was a priest, named Redshaw—

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## THE LOVERS

### AND THE GHOSTLY FATHER.

HERBERT reached
(Beyond—where, in a turret's shadow-blur,
The west wall terminates) a lone spot beached
As 't were beside the splendour of a vale
Whose leafy billows seemed for skiffs of fairy-tale,

And, at a little window, well-nigh hid
Behind an ivy-mantled buttress, tapping,
Paused, for some moments, listening.—Then, amid
Green gaps where overhead were fern-leaves lapping,
He wound his way toward a Postern-door
Which oft with stealthy step he'd sought before.

It was—though scarcely—open. Once within
Its way, he fastened it,—and there, with breath
Suspended (while, through vine-roofs trembling, thin,
The night-sheen dropped in spangles), still as death,

He waited, with a lover's eager prayer,
For some soft signal—floated on the air.

A sound—so low, it seemed like silv'ring light
Dropped upon Arcady, or wakeful flowers
That, waving, kiss and whisper,—and (a bright,
Arched opening reaching at a bound) the bowers
And flow'r-beds, with a beating heart, and eye
'A-light' with love, he threaded rapidly!—

—Near a small arbour pausing—stood he—fixed
In adoration; for, a girl sat there
The thought of whom with all his being mixed—
For whom his love was—nameless,—and, she, fair,
Some air preluding, touched from her guitar
Sweet promise of a voice a Sappho's lyre might mar.

Nor long before the music of that voice
Thrilled him with rapture waited he—nor long
She sang,—to sing she scarcely seemed from choice,
For brief as mournful was her little song . . . .

* * * * * *

"Lelia!" he cried.

"I'm here!" she answered.

"Ah?"
Approaching, he replies, "and it is well
You tell me—I might think you in some star,
Singing to angels, else! But, say—what spell
Of sadness has come o'er you? Am I late?
Can I have grieved you?—or—can I some grief abate?"

—"Herbert," she said, with an impassioned look
Of tender sadness which, as he concluded,
Had startlingly his whole attention took,
"You would not—could not grieve me—yet, intruded
Have—grave thoughts,—but—not now!—you are not late—
I was too restless, at the window, there, to wait;—

"Unlocked I left the Postern-door, and knew
You'd in the garden seek me...."

* * * * * *

So, he sat,
In silence, blank, upon a seat he drew
Before her—took her hand (to beg through that
Her sorrow she would tell him)—and then waited—
Watching—till her emotion had abated.

* * * * * *

She looked upon him—oh ! that look !

Her eyes
Were large, and full of deep, soft light, and blue
As summer-ether—tender, truthful, wise,
And lovingly far-gazing,—nor from view
Were hidden by their 'lashes' tinted fair
With dyes like those which gleamed among her golden hair,—

For, openly on all things, e'en when grave,
She gazed . . . .

* * * * * *

And still she seeks his thought—he hers ;
Both silent—smiling, . . . . fixed each look, . . . . grief's wave
Of crystal o'er each vision, . . . . and nought stirs—
Until—her flushing cheeks with tears now moist—
She sobs—as only may the few who've much rejoiced.

* * * * * *

"Lelia ! dear Lelia ! what is this ?" he cried,
"Nay, speak to me ! I must not see you *so* !
Oh, to have saved these tears I would have died !
What is it ? tell me !—nay, let Herbert know—

Herbert who, ere misfortune might us sever,
Had meant this night to ask you to be his for ever!"

"Herbert!"—she cried, and started to her feet—
—"Herbert," she went on, kindly, "it has come—
The hour for wisdom,—thus no more to meet
Must be our resolution, if a doom
Of misery for me you would not make,
And be yourself unhappy for my sake!

"Herbert, 't was of the Convent I would speak!
'T was thinking of the Convent made me sad!
For partings all are painful—and—I'm weak—
Only a girl, you know—and . . . ."

"Am I mad?"

He gasped. "*That* folly? Some one told . . . . I thought
'T was but a childish fancy—long since come to
nought!"

"Of late I've feared you thought so, Herbert . . . ."

"'Feared!'

You 'feared?' oh, say again you 'feared!' for when
You 'feared' you loved me!—Lelia! I have reared
My hope of earthly bliss on that which then
Induced your fear!—The 'Convent,' Lelia? no!
You would not kill me!—will not—must not go!"

"My duty—conscience—promise . . . ."

"When? to whom?"

"Four years ago, to Father Redshaw."

"'Four?'—
Four years! Ah, when a child almost,—there's room
To grapple with this man! He pressed you sore
With lies about the world? and, terror-led . . . . ?"

"He tells not what we say,—I tell not what he said."

"This bargain shall be cancelled . . . . !"

"Nay . . . ."

"But, *yea*!—
I will not have you used like things which lack
The power to reason! Were it made to-day—
This promise, Lelia!—I might gather back
Unheard, my tortured feelings to that calm
Which slowly ends in death—and thinks no harm!

"Your womanhood must speak, and must be free
Before it speaks—for, I believe that, now,
You dare not know what more your heart for me
May have than friendship!"

"And—if I my vow
Must keep ? will cousin Herbert cause me pain
By telling me of earthly love again ? "

"'Pain!' 'Fear' and 'pain?' You love me!—Your resolve
Will lose you every joy that life can give,
And kill you ! Acts unnatural involve
The heart's destruction, but *you* could not *live*
And know you'd done them ! No ! you will not do
This thing !—so wrong to me—so hard for you !

"I would not speak thus but that I do know
You love me—'t were presumption !—Oh! believe
'T were better toward my weakness, now, to show
Brave mercy than . . . . ! 'My weakness ?' I deceive
Myself and you ! it is not weak to love
That beauty which *must* be mere earthliness above !

"Oh, Lelia ! I have revelled in the thought
Of having in this world of grief and wrong
One friend whose truth had me, unworthy, taught
In truthfulness her sympathy to long,—
You—whom I felt that I could never doubt—
You, whom I felt I had not dared to live without !

"And I have searched full oft in your kind eyes
And thought my image there, and felt, to die
To save or serve you were to die as dies
A conqu'ror—glad—to glory! Oh, deny
Me not your love! my peace—my life,'s at stake!
—You will not leave my trembling heart to break?—

—"Nay, dearest, weep not! 'tis not thus I've known—
That I *should* know—the loveliness I've seen,
In silent wonder, as the years have flown,
Fast opening, hourly, while have beggared been
My fancies of the beautiful! and now
To see thee weep—I grieve—no words would tell thee
how!

"I've loved thee, Lelia, as but few may love—
Without a selfish thought—with all my soul!
And who shall take the heart I prize above
Wealth, honours, or existence, and control
Its actions? or, the pow'r of love defy,
And dare me, desp'rate, to possess thee . . . . ?"

"*I!*"

This last, deep 'I!' was Redshaw's:—there he stood,
Facing the Cousins, with a cold, fixed gaze,
And motionless.

In timid maidenhood—
With blushing reverence, and dumb amaze,
Lelia kept Herbert's side, who did not stir,
But—thundered—as he stared at Redshaw,—"Sir?

"This is Miss Auford! I am Herbert Vaughan....!"

...."We'd be alone!" he added,—and then waited....

"Which facts," replied the Priest, with quiet scorn,
"I might not think it needful to have stated,
Were they unknown.... But, it is growing late.
My Daughter, to the House I will upon you wait."

"It is not yet the hour when we retire—"
Said Herbert, "Father—p'rhaps you've learned that too?
Your services we do not quite require—
Another had not offered such."

"Umph!—true!—
My gown?—Your insult, boy,'s without a barb."

"Do we *both* take advantage of your garb?"

* * * * * *

Lelia, who during their last words had looked
Bewildered, as half-wond'ring by what right
E'en her Confessor claim could to have brooked
By Herbert Vaughan such insolence, in spite
Of Redshaw's offer, here withdrew, alone—
Suddenly—secretly—and—toward the House was
gone.

The Priest turned:—fain had followed,—but—'t were
vain
For him to follow her among the leaves,—

So, he confronted Herbert once again.—

—But Herbert spake not. "She—already—grieves
About this altercation," was his thought
"Else had she fled not. *Now*, 't must end in nought."

Then, *both* the girl's guitar appeared to spy
At the same moment.

Herbert reached it first,
Yet—hardly—ere the Priest had touched it.

"*I*
Would take the toy" said Redshaw "if I durst
Permission beg."

Said Herbert, "Nay, 't is light
Enough !—*I*'ll bear it, now,—shall, *after*, p'rhaps, to-
night."

—And, so, without more waste of words, they parted,—
Apart to seek the Castle,—Herbert slowly,—
The Priest (to get false accusations started
Against the angry youth) with haste unholy.
—Ere Herbert reached the battlements a light
From Lelia's chamber-window gleamed a sad 'Good-
night.'

* * * * * *

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## WHAT THE PRIEST THOUGHT.

"'T WAS a strange interview" (mused Redshaw,
wending
His lone way down the hill-path, in the gloom,
An hour later)—"its beginning—ending,
Scarce compassing the moment.—There'd be room,
I dreamed, to work his power o'er Lelia harm.
—Some shrewd thought crossed him,—he was wondrous
calm.—

"I fancied he would bluster—but—though young—
He hath a cautiousness I do not like.
—He gave me no advantage,—and, among
The few things spoke—*one* could not fail to strike—
'I'll bear it *now*,—*shall*—*after*'—in a tone
Of stern will uttered! Then, some words he heard alone.

"Too like his father—tall, and dark, and bold.—
His mother's idol,—while his brothers (brave
As he) all love him.—Vaughans! from days of old
The Church's friends—the church*man*'s foes!—and grave
And polished in your sternness!—ye should be
Opposed but with one weapon—smooth hypocrisy!

"The Aufords?—never staunch! The Morsdells?—*ours*!
—'T will be a hard fight.

Yet he *must not* wed
This changeling!—He is gone,—and—if the powers
Of our good priestcraft fail not—she—is dead
To him—for ever! We shall see—shall see!
—How the wind howls!—Ah! what was 't slunk behind yon tree?"

* * * * * *

—And thus—while, first, the weather's change was told
By the witch-music 'mong the rocking trees,
And, then, the rumbling thunder nearer rolled,
'Mid lightning-flashes, on the sobbing breeze,
Till burst the storm (like Hell from Heaven down tossed)—
He entered a black shadow, and—was lost.

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## WHO COULD THEY BE?

'TIME fled.'—How simple such assertion sounds.
Something so like the phrase, in all that's writ
Or dreamed or spoke, so needfully abounds!
The truth's so true it kills the preacher's wit—
As daily-passing corpses dull the sense
Of death's swift-coming, dread omnipotence!

But—let that pass,—such thoughts are for the hour
Of meditation!

* * * * * *

In the busy town
Of Springleaf, at the ceasing of a shower—
Before its droppings from the eaves were down,
And while the cold, wet pavements gleamed the glare
Of lights ('t was eve) reflected everywhere,

A maiden from a pathway stepped—and stayed
Some moments near its edge—as though she sought
Yet feared attention.

Was to beg her *trade ?*—
—P'rhaps.—Yet—by want, reluctant, to it brought
She seemed.—Of misery grotesque no trace
She bore—but painfully her woe looked commonplace.

Not ragged were her garments :—they were mean,
And thin, and colourless, and weatherstained.—
—The winters she had known were p'rhaps, eighteen,—
Though older she appeared—pinched, wan, and pained.
Slight was her figure,—weak, but straight and tall—
And, dark, her face had been what painters 'queenly' call.

* * * * * *

Among the listeners there was one whose brow
Was pale and sad, and full of thought and care,—

Who seemed of those to whom the Fates allow
Great joys, with greater griefs than most men share.
Graved signs of courage, wisdom, wearing play
Of feeling—'mong deep lines which formed his features lay.

Tall, strikingly attired, young, handsome, dark,
He'd have excited in the loitering group
Keen curiosity, from rude remark
Had not his rearward stand and studied stoop—
Hiding, in shadows of his hat's slouched brim
And in his mantle's folds, his face—protected him.

*A likeness strange*, too,—easy to perceive
Had he regarded been—'tween him and her
Who sang so witchingly the make-believe
Of merriment chilled charity to stir
Was little lessened by the parts they bore,—
Though he a man was, rich,—a woman she—how poor!

He listened pensively,—nor stirred—till shook
Her voice with strong emotion. *Then* he fell
*Behind* the crowd,—then stood apart,—then took
To pacing to and fro within the spell
Of her sound-sorcery . . . .

* * * * * *

And then, as still she warbled, he stole near her,
—And, while she, at his bounty in surprise
A moment, paused—had vanished. He could hear her
Resume her melody, but fled as flies
Taught Wisdom from the wine-cup, for, he'd need
Of strength,—though young, he had of sorrow—p'rhaps,
his meed.

* * * * * * * *

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## THE SPY.

He fled, and, in his fancy mutt'ring spells
To call up courage—memories of wrongs
To be revenged, and insults which like hells
Were in those mem'ries burning—, through the throngs
Of that bright, busy thoroughfare reached soon
A hill-street, up which faint light shimmered from the
moon;

For now, like sad thoughts gleaming-hope-surrounded,
The clouds were fringed with light.

While down he sped—

E'en to the hills by which the view was bounded
A flood of silvery refulgence spread
And made the myriad rain-moist roofs below him
Flash its blue glitter up, his way to show him.

—As through a broad church-shadow he descended
A voice his stride arrested, and a man
(In whom theology and law seem'd blended),
Dressed, on a recently-passed fashion's plan,
In black (its threadbare brown by night concealed),
Baring his head, to bow, himself with grace revealed.

" You can be punctual, I see:" he said—
The usual accosting over—" I,
Though here, must ask indulgence.—Some one dead
(Dead suddenly it seems—death's mystery
Darkened by strange surroundings) makes the talk
Of yonder folk to whom—I'd listen, ere our walk."

He spoke with a slight accent—very slight—
Of—French, perhaps,—with an umbrella, rare
And old enough to smile at, the red light
Round a small tavern indicated, where,
In groups, men gossiped, or were gliding in
And out the glare-lit doorway, 'mid a growing din.

"Shall we go down together—'t will scarce cost
Us half-an-hour?" he added,—and they went—
And to the crowd of noisy idlers crossed,
And listened, here, to drunken argument
And, there, to sober information,—then,
Inside the tavern, heard the gossip o'er again.

The gentleman in black was calm and quiet—
Retiring, and attracted no attention,—
Noted each feature in the little riot—
Each falsehood, fact, or thought each thought to mention,—
And when the inquest, held up-stairs, was ended
Some need of some refreshment straight pretended.

"And since we're here," he said, "and this short phrase—
The jury's 'Wilful murder'—must disperse
These news-knights, and the tavern's siege will raise,
And leave us thought-free, and we best rehearse
The parts we needs must play abroad at home,
—We'll call *this* home, and—hear your story. Come!"

And into a large closet (or small room)—
First having ordered wine—he led the way;
And, by a bright fire sitting, to consume
The moments, stirred it, as the listless may,—
And then (they'd for the Maid and wine to wait)
Drew figures in the ashes 'neath the grate.

And then the Maid had come and gone, and he
Who wore the mantle and slouched hat (apart,
And forward leaning, half in reverie,
On a rough table), with a weary heart,
Tapping the floor, and tilted on his chair,
Said—"Quite *sensational*, then, this affair?"

"Why, yes,—it seems so:" said the other—"not
That I approve your *word*,—it sounds like cant.
—Manners and men keep changing.—Once, God wot
Bloodshedding was the business less of Want
Than of Ambition,—'t was the idle great
Did murder,—while the people—worked, and drank,
and ate.

"They work less now,—they weep—an inward weeping
That has no tears, and does not ease the soul.
Their bread by titled tradesfolk held in keeping—
Their right hand's cunning in some clique's control,—
As freemen taught, and treated as scorned slaves—
They plot—through passion which no longer raves,

"And envying luxury, and learning greed
And craft from fashion—to damnation go,—
Some mild priest telling them—when money-meed
For smoth'ring babes or braining sires they know

They've missed, and are disgusted—they've repented:—
And then the thoughtful scowl, storm, write (men say
'demented'),

"And books are brought forth—earnest books whose
burdens,
As ever, are the stories of their age.
Crimes of 'the day' are canvassed, and their guerdons,—
And culprit-motives half the world engage;—
While conscience-stricken crowds, in wealth's unrest
By means called 'questionable'—scared, protest!"

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## THAT WALK WITH THE DEVIL.

"'T is true, while fools and knaves refuse to hear
What man's morality is like, some tell
The Tale of Life by halves,—show all that's drear
And point no moral, though on earth a hell
Ends crime's course ever, and an honest will,
Through ev'ry wild vicissitude—*hopes* still.

"'T is true, too, that the evil's, outside, fair
As is the good and's but by love perceived,—

That, clear-eyed Love, e'en, voiceless through despair,
May sit down vacant, weeping, unbelieved.
SIN 's—well—like Satan walking, one might say,
With Christ toward the Temple's pinnacle that day.

"My pious mother's fancy followed oft
The pair up Ophel, she would tell—and He,
The Nazarene, would turn, with gaze all soft
And wondering and pitiful, and see—
The Wilderness-Temptation-scene left far—
But—just below them, Judas's Aceldama.

"And, then, where over Hinnom shadows hung—
Dark as the mem'ries of its glens of death,
In which foul Jewesses their babes had flung
To Molech, while the Jew with drunken breath
Belched blasphemies—His look would linger sadly,—
Prophetic of the fate the Jew seemed daring madly.

"And when they 'd walked awhile He 'd turn again,
And, with His eye of love, would sweep the vale
Where the red sycamine—rivalling in vain
The roses that were burthening the gale
With fragrance for the lilies—many a shade
Gemmed which the elms in deep Jehoshaphat had made.

"And then He 'd note a distant streak that lay
Up, o'er the Hill of Olives, which would be
So oft, He knew, His future quiet way
To Martha's Mary's nook in Bethany,—
His soft smile sadd'ning as his eye would fall
Where drear Gethsemane dreamed 'neath the City-wall.

"But no one saw aught in them save a sage,
Grave, long-robed, and majestic—and a swarth,
Tall, tunicked, unarmed chief ('mid youth and age
Which thronged the streets—in ribaldry and wrath
Gems, fruits, or 'purple and fine linen,' vending)
Towárd the Temple-cloister's South Gate slowly
wending.

"'And as,' she'd say, 'those crowds no Fiend could see
Because they saw no Saviour—even now
Latter-day-demons in disguise stalk free
'Mid greed too proud, cold, blind to truth to bow,—
The gold-thirst's horror-tale half understood,—
'Peace! peace!' where's no peace, cried,—scarce
recognised *God's* good.'"

## RELATIVES.

"But—your own story . . . . ?"

"Yes,—my name, you've heard,"
Said Herbert, heedless of the other's nod
(For neither'd changed his place nor turned nor stirred),
"Is Vaughan. You've heard, too, of the *ichabod*
Upon my future, p'rhaps?—well—thus is started
The tale of how its glory has departed:—

"My mother's maiden-name was Auford. She
A sister had and brother who were both
Her juniors. They were orphans.—They'd, all three,
Submitted to the training (somewhat loth,
I fancy) of the wily Priests of Rome.
—Though, wealthy, they'd escaped the Convent's
withering gloom.

"My mother married first. My father's creed
Was, like her own, half-Romish—*only* 'half.'
Some of the Church's teachings both agreed
Were right,—the rest they ridiculed. *He*'d laugh,
Yet well support it. *She*'d have kept it poor.
—They both distrusted priests, who seldom sought
their door.

"Her sister married one who, like my sire,
Gave to the Church wealth, freely, but gave, too,
His heart and conscience; and with love or ire
His wavering helpmate closer drove or drew
Toward its 'communion.' He was Morsdell named
(Sir Hubert)—and his house for sheltering need was
famed.

"Their brother, Herbert, with beliefs above
ROME'S Ritual, yet doubted by Rome's foes,—
With few 'connexions,'—lonely,—came to love
And wed—'some beggar' (as the story goes)—
A girl who, *protestant*, of poor degree,
Was only good and wise, and fair exceedingly.

"Soon uncle Herbert Auford took this wife
His kinsfolk hated, weak in health, to France,
Where they 'd a daughter born, and hoped in life,—
Till parted by deplorable mischance
At Carmaux . . . ."

"'Carmaux!'" turning, with a stare,
The listener cried,—then added, "Yes, 't was there."

"'There,' Captain Boura!—*what* was *there*, then?"
slowly
Asked Herbert, eyeing his companion keenly.

—And then they waited—pond'ring—silent wholly,—
Both looking downwards,—Boura rapt serenely
In some slow-passing vision of past years,
And faintly smiling,—Herbert racked by hopes and fears.

* * * * * *

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## MAKING A NUN OF HER.

At length, the Frenchman, fixing his grey eyes
On Herbert, gravely said—"When asked to try
If I could aid you I'd a vague surmise
That Auford was a name in days gone by
Familiar to me,—hitherto I've sought
In vain the whereabout whence this surmise was brought.

"I now remember 't was at Carmaux, when
(Some—eighteen years ago) had just occurred
A strange, sad loss there 'mong the Englishmen,
That I the name with interest first heard.
I've memoranda, p'rhaps: but—let us see
If in your story aught assists my memory."

"Before," resumed, then, Herbert, "they had been
Two years, I think, at Carmaux business took
Poor Auford to Madras. He did not mean
To leave his love alone long in their nook
Lapped among roses,—she was fragile-fair,
And lovelier to him for needing all his care.

"But, in a little while sad letters came,—
Sick unto death he lay—with no one by
But strangers,—so, she, kneeling, sobbed his name
To heaven, and toward him straight prepared to fly.
—They did not with their sorrows long abide :—
Resolved, though weak, she went,—and found him
dead,—and died.

"Her baby-girl, that, almost from its birth
Had nestled on another, she had left
At Carmaux, where they 'd told her nought on earth
Could save its life, if of its nurse bereft :—
She would herself get well in fresh sea-air,
They said, and from her journey come back strong as
fair.

—"Then, tidings came to Morsdell of the fate
Of Auford and his wife ; and Morsdell found
The infant—heiress sole of their estate,
And Lelia named—a nurse, on English ground,

And reared her till she to a fairy grew.
—Then, I, at Morsdell House, my cousin Lelia knew.

"Morsdell was dead; but still the house was ruled
By priestcraft—stale and ever-costly sin
'Tween dread and daring—fooler and befooled,—
The worldling's Pantomime, o'er-paid, to win,
With shams, his coward soul from thought, for him
Too grave, of Christ-words, sin-depths, and the
seraphim!

"And Lelia was in time 'confessed,' 'advised,'
'Absolved.'—We saw not what she 'd to confess
That should not leave the 'father' quite surprised
At her young faith and his old wickedness;—
All candour she,—he, craft, at rite or revel,—
An angel getting 'absolution' from the devil!

"And ev'ry oily sympathy in word,
With ev'ry flatt'ry veiled contempt devises,
And ev'ry saint-romance hell, pleased, hath heard,
And ev'ry soft assumption fraud disguises,
And ev'ry curse of creeds than Rome's proved purer—
Was used to cheat, please, lure, awe, and, for Rome,
secure her.

"So that, ere through her fifteenth year she 'd tripped
O'er the crisp sods of winter, or had kissed
The summer-flowers, she had, artless, sipped
Of superstition's cup, and, shudd'ring, missed
Her freedom,—tricked by Father Redshaw, she
Had given herself and fortune to some nunnery.

"Then, shadows from her 'future,' stretching back,
Had chilled her 'present,'—she was pensive—changed.
—We learned the cause.—She did not courage lack,—
E'en when she saw, o'er this, her kinsfolk ranged
'Gainst Redshaw, silent, *felt* she the regret
He, silent, *feigned*,—and then—they seemed to, both,
forget.

"And, through four years, which followed, she and I
That youth-life, bliss-like, lived which Love-bards
sing,—
While Redshaw, unsuspected, played the spy,—
And, meek, insidious, plotted ways to bring
His project to the ripening. Careless we,—
What 'morrows black' could born of days so brilliant
be?

"In youth, awhile, we live *the passing* hour,
As do the angels:—after, sadly-wise,

The worthless moments *with* us scarce have power
To keep us from the mysteries of the skies.
—Life 's but a hope, as we through dangers plod,
Its future may not crush us ere the grave and God.

" Lelia and I, with Art, Romance, and Song,
Coaxing the hours to linger, helped their haste.
She knew I thought Rome's teaching might be wrong,
And by that thought outside Rome's 'pale' was placed,
Yet heard me use my freedom's rights and powers
Nor laughed a laugh the less among the glades and
bowers.

" That he who gives his conscience to a priest
Can never get his freedom from a king—
That, what her father's faith was, when released
From time-ills, she'd not learned by questioning—
Were two things, I felt certain, see she must,—
Though gay, and seeming scarce herself to think to
trust.

" But, when the chill-cloud, change (which o'er the
charm
Of ev'ry full-grown joy comes, with'ring, ever),
Slanted its shadows toward us, that strange calm
That seems the doomed from dread awhile to sever
Would, as we dreamed gay dreams of life aloud
Together, come upon her ghostly as a shroud.

"Our love we had not spoken though we'd told it.
Each of the other's 'faith,' too, only guessed.
Our fate—well, did we not each day behold it?
Were not friends silent, kind, and we caressed?—
But—came a moment big to me with dread,—
A word—scarce whispered—and—my heart within me
dead!

"Redshaw had watched and worked, and kept alive
In Lelia girl-belief in Rome's grim power
To curse whoe'er'd gifts promised it contrive
To keep back from its altars—but, to shower
On *her* word-blessings failed not,—and her debt
He'd left her, long, in maiden pastimes, to forget.

"And so it was, that, wakening to our love
(Of which, e'en then, she seemed but half-aware),
She was reminded that 'the Church's dove,'
As Redshaw call'd her, must, ere long, repair
To other nests than ours,—and, sad and still,
Admitted the relentless priest must have his will.

"But there were other wills than his that claimed
To be consulted. Ignorant—assuming—
He'd treated me with insult Lelia blamed
And I resented; and, a contest looming,

Aunt Morsdell urged 'the girl' at once to go:
—My mother, and my brothers, and myself, said—'No.'

"The Vaughans and their 'connexions' 'twould not do
To openly defy,—so, Redshaw listed
Some mutual friends to urge his cause, and view
With favour purposes by falsehood misted,—
And Lelia—well—she went to try a year
Of 'life' where we could visit—in a nun-house, near.

"We never saw her more. 'Escaped,' they said,
'She will not deign communion with earth,—
Has *changed her name* and convent, and is dead
To *kindred*-ties and *sublunary* worth:'
—And all attempts to make the priest explain
Aught further were attempts blamed, baffled, and in vain."

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## THE NUN-HOUSE.

* * * * * *

"One night—'t was moonlight—I was forth alone.
—The Convent of St. Xavier's turrets (bare
Above the woods which belt them like a zone

Near yon black, winding river—'gainst the sky
Tall land-marks) lured me where the pale nuns, lonely,
die.

"And, by the Convent-wall, down, slowly, wending,
Toward the darkling water, heedless why,
A night-shriek shocked me to a stand—suspending
My breath, and curdling all my blood,—a cry
(Of 'Herbert!'—almost fainter than the sound
Of a thief's foot-fall) piercing, upward, through the
ground.

"'I'm here!' I answered, shouting,—and my voice
Seemed from the rocks hurled back, and through the
wood,
And broken into many to rejoice
And mock at my discomfiture. I stood
Wond'ring to what I'd answered. What could mean
That voice mine made seem nothing?—had it fancy
been?

"Before I'd time the rashness to regret
Which made the weird shades vocal with my dread,
Lifting my gaze to where a dark mound met
(Within the wall) the witch-gleam overhead.
I saw a cowled monk, mystic as the hour,
Along its ridge, black-outlined 'gainst the glimmer,
cower.

"And where the mound stretched in, before a grove
Of yews, toward the Convent, at its rear,
A woman, with a lantern, following, strove
To pierce the shadows (round her deep and drear)
In which her swinging, yellow, flick'ring light
But just revealed her form, in garb of ghostly white.

"Knowing a postern-door near which I 'd halted
Must be the point toward which their night-walk tended,
I hastened where the wood a darkness vaulted
With whose lone depths no straggling moonbeam
blended,
And, unseen, oft back-looking lightward, saw
The monk's form—coming—coming—slow—a thing of
awe.

"I could not quit the trees without the chance
Of being noticed—known, perhaps. So nigh,
Once, the black phantom passed me—to advance
A step had been to cross it. Cautiously
I watched it till it toward the wall returned,—
Then, from my danger fled, enraged at Lelia's learned.'

* * * * * *

"The man had had the power and will to do
Me once a service, and I knew him well.
It was that he 'd been vilely wronged too true
For *him* to find it nought his hate to quell.
He was 'absolved,' to please them, from an oath
Which now to swear again 't is like he 'd not be loath.

"And with this wight I sought, and soon obtained,
An interview, to learn, if learn I could,
Something of Lelia. He was always chained,
As 't were, I found, to that lone gate, where would
No sound the Convent come from,—whence was seen
Nought but its dense, tall tree-enclosure of dull green.

"But though, save serving-folk, who went and came
He seldom saw, yet, sometimes, were such signs
(To his hate-keened perception) of foul shame
Wrought in the nun-house there—as thought combines
With horror, and the impulse to wild aid :—
And *one*, he said, his blood to curdle e'en had made.

"One evening, in the dreary, grey, damp chill
Of April-twilight, at that lonesome gate,
A carriage (with its occupants death-still—
Its windows closed—its driver, like a Fate,
Dark-cloaked in mystery, and sad its hue
As the scene round it), ent'ring, toward the convent flew.

"It had arrived there slowly: but, as through
The opened way it passed, quick, painful cries
(From its interior, of—'St. Xavier, too?
Help! help! Oh, blackest of black villanies!
I will not go! I . . . .'), and a moan forlorn,
Were out of hearing by its lashed steeds swiftly borne.

"And when (of the event some details dread,
With other madd'ning facts of afterward,
By Lowstoff, fierce, recounted) we were led
By light in which I trembled to inferred,
But sadly-certain, proof that Lelia lay
There, dead, or dying, p'rhaps—my reason nigh gave
way.

"I knew that 't was her fortune they were seeking—
Vowed I would rescue her—cried Lowstoff thanks—
And rushed away, while yet the man was speaking,
For aid—of whoso would among the ranks
Of friends or kinsfolk.—None would help afford
Who could,—none could who would.—My brothers
were abroad.

"And, so, we (I and Lowstoff), in the ways
Which the excited-skilless use, endeavoured,
Long, vainly, to release her.—Then, for days
I fought through legal formulas which severed

Me and my best hopes hourly,—and was told
The aid of law I could not get through grace or gold.

"Yet, one, as you 're aware, among the number
Of those we pay for services uncivil
(Forbid with my affairs the State to cumber),
Forbore the bureaucrat's vague, pride-toned drivel,
And, learning all my want, then, spoke of you,
His friend, who might what office dared not for me do."

---

## THE GIPSY.

"I see," said Boura, smiling, as he drew,
During the pause which followed, from his pocket
A letter he just glanced upon anew,
"He did n't hear your mis'ry but to mock it;
Yet—help he hopes and asks supposes me
Informed by you,—have I, then, *all* your history?"

"All;" answered Herbert, "yes. Yet, stay!—one morn,
Just ere that struggle Father Redshaw started,

Whose aim was my ejection, 'mid the scorn
Of priests, from Lelia's home, with hope departed,
Yon vale, by Morsdell House, with music gay,
From flags and flow'rs seemed crying—'Come! keep
holiday!'

"It was the May-fair morning. Shone the sun
On many a village-beauty robbing there
The gardens for her wreath, or chatting fun
While ribbon-favours making with quick care—
On many a rustic *boúdoir* littered round
With trappings which made maiden holiday-hearts
bound—

"Or smartened swains at mirrors side-locks curling—
Or sires persuaded years had made them younger,
And buxom dames their finery begirling,
Decided they 'd through care be dull no longer,—
On maypoles, mimes, cakes, ale, and shows, and toys,
And swings, and merry-go-rounds for glee-mad girls
and boys.

"And, as the day advanced—as grew the din
Where lusty peasants danced 'mid shouts and laughter,
And crowds of richer folk came pouring in
To join or judge the sports (proclaimed thereafter),

With Lelia I the hill-brow sought, to look
Upon a scene in which I knew she interest took.

"The music—o'er the murmur of the voices
Up-floated—and the flitting to and fro
Of colours, as, according to its choices
Of mirth, the multitude about would go,
Down the green vale-side drew us, in glad haste
To see old Sorrow out of Springleaf chased.

"So, laughing, as from bush to bush we ran
To seize some branch and check our steepy course,
Before the ground to level grow began
We reached a kind of earth-wall, clad in gorse,—
And, peering o'er it, just beneath us found
A gipsy, with her infant, seated on the ground.

"The babe was at the breast, asleep. The mother
Was young and handsome. Looking up, she smiled—
Rose from her grassy seat—essayed to smother
With kisses the vexed outcry of her child,
And stepped toward a gap where she would meet us,—
Beginning, noisily, as we approached, to greet us.

"'Bestow your charity, kind gentlefolk!
And let me tell your fortune, lady fair!'

(Half singing it, half saying it) she broke
With startling shrillness forth, as I, aware
Of Lelia's girlish fear, too rudely threw
A coin toward her to avoid an interview.

"Deliberately treading with slight scorn
The silver in the dirt (it lay quite near her)
She recommenced—'To wondrous luck you 're born,
The Gipsy sees, sweet lady . . . .

"'Ah?—you fear her!'

—"And Lelia had stepped past her.

"I, to stay her
From following Lelia, stopped, and ventured to gainsay her.

"'Yes, yes! "the gipsy lies," you 'd say if all
You thought you said!' she answered to my banter,
'Tell *her I* bid her hope whate'er befall!—
I should some mystifying jargon cant her
She feared, I fancy.—*You* 'll no *cousin* wed!—
*Don't* tell her *that*! Hope you! hope on!'

"She turned, and fled.

"Odd, simple, and abrupt, the speech and manner
Fixed me some moments to the spot reflecting;
And when I, joining Lelia, sought to plan her
Some gay distraction, awkwardly collecting
My scattered thoughts their import I betrayed—
That, what I'd heard it wisdom to be silent made.

"And, so, she curious became,—entreated
Until I told her—all 't was wise to tell.
The gipsy's counsel, 'Hope!' she thought defeated
By some despair implied—and o'er her fell
Her fate's foreshadow, faintly, then and there,—
What Fate had said of me to say I did not dare.

"For, love, with us, had been a bliss unspoken—
A cause all nameless of effect all joy.
*I* had not by a breath its silence broken—
Afraid its heaven with earth-thought to alloy.
*She* knew not how she loved—nor dreamed, delighted,
Of future union—were we not united?

"And, from the hour when down that hill we wandered
Less mirthful than at starting and more slow
While each upon the other's pond'rings pondered
Though feigning int'rest in the *fête* below,
A pensiveness would oftentimes steal o'er her
Which—but my tale you're not attending, Monsieur
Boura!'

* * * * * *

## PARTING.

DURING the last few moments Boura's look
Of wondering excitement had told plainly
That he in Herbert's story int'rest took
Which was not very likely to end vainly:—
*Now* he as evidently gave no heed
To aught that Herbert said—was lost in thought
indeed.

There was a pause. Then, Boura, fixing, slowly,
His gaze on Herbert, said—"The '*gipsies*,' too?—
'Auford?'—at 'Carmaux?'—nay, 't was more unholy
Than I suspected, p'rhaps, that crime!—True—true—
'*You will no cousin wed*;'—yet, or my skill
And wisdom are at fault or you 'll wed—*whom you will*.

"You start, friend (not, though, as you 'd start if all
I think I see you saw), and stare as striving
To stare some secret from me. To forestall
A mystery *I* but guess of—will 't be driving

Your purpose to its end? You 'll find my aid
Efficient most where most alone my plans I've laid.

"*Now* let us part.—I shall reseek you soon—
With tidings, p'rhaps, that turn will thought to deed.
Meanwhile, be watchful, silent as the noon
Of night, and little seen, and—patient.—Need,
On second thoughts, for counsel there may be:—
—Here—two days hence—to sup, say—we'll each
other see."

Then, rising, they went out (Boura, in passing
The little inn-tap, paying for their cheer,
And, on the door-step ling'ring briefly, farcing
With Herbert kindly for his aspect drear),
Where (each his own way glancing ere they started)
They shook hands, gravely,—said–'Good-bye,' and, so
—had parted.

—Parted—like all the parted, all unknowing
How they might meet again, or when, or where.

—Nay! meet the parted more?—The boy that, going
So lately from the hearth a child to share
In school-strife, was all tenderness, returns
Changed; and for joys, than those he left less gentle,
yearns!

The lass and her lad-lover, parted, dreaming
Of fame and fortune won by him for her,
Meet, man and woman, and in nothing seeming,
Save faithfulness, the same,—the thought and stir
Of life-war leave so soon their stern, dark traces
Where bliss beamed soft in smiles upon fresh, youthful faces!

And sisters, too, and brothers, separated
(The brothers and the sisters each from each,—
*All* from their youth-home), who have, yearning, waited
For meetings—greetings—fond, of look and speech,—
Met, start at grizzled locks and lines of care
Which tell how time hath altered all from what they were!

Friends, reunited, think not as they thought
Before they parted—love not former loves!
With awe they word not find each other brought
Within that shadow of THE CHANGE where moves
Ambition wearily—where pride gives way
While men grow equal near the close of life's lost day!

And, hence, when, whisp'ring low at tender hours,
Love talks to sorrow of A WORLD TO BE—

The other 's Boura—walking with his thought,
In a lone street, apart—and scarce aware
(When, presently, he's by his grave stride brought
Beyond the dwellings) of her presence, there,
Before him, on the valley-slope which ends
Near the grim porch they 'll enter, strangers—close,
like friends.

* * * * * *

—The church was thronged.—'Mid shadows (from the
roof
Like dismal drap'ries hanging), eager eyes
Of faces pale, or flushed, or passion-proof,
In lone rays dimmed by 'storied window'-dyes'
Or taper-glimmers, glistened, while around
Soft chants seemed wafting incense—incense holy sound.

For, some old chorus (borrowed it might be
From early-Christian chronicles of caves
And catacombs resounding solemnly
With worship hidden from the pagan braves)
Rolled forth—and made the service sacred seem—
From screen-hid choirs, along the aisles and nave, this
theme—

* * * * * *

—And such, of the excitement, was the force
About the entrance, that, save Boura, saw,
P'rhaps, no one how the Widow left, of course,
Untouched the 'holy water'—failed to draw
Upon her forehead pale the Cross's sign—
And, mingling in the crowd, pressed forward toward
the Shrine.

—Then, e'en from Boura's gaze she 'd gone (unmissed;
For, he had work there which might well employ
His whole attention, and was fain to list
With all his soul the sounds—like fear and joy—
With which unseen approaching singers filled
The altar-transept and the awe-struck listeners
thrilled).—

—On the procession came—the red-crossed priest—
The little, white-robed acolytes (their books
And swinging censers bearing)—with their feast
Of sound the choristers—and—then—with looks
Unearthly, silent nuns,—and, with these, *one*—
As fair a sorrowing maid as ever missed life's sun.

With hair—skin—eyes—gold, rose-tints, and soft blue.
An angel's had her snowy garments seemed,—
But, agitation gave her cheeks their hue,
And somewhat wasted might her form be deemed;—

And, decked for sacrifice, with practised care,
Too sad she seemed for heaven—too good for earth to spare.

* * * * * *

—Her head is raised! See!—Doth she seek some aid
In dire extremity? or look her last
On earth-friends merely?

God!—that shriek!—'t hath made
A hush that seems an awe-dream of all past!
For, one deep, sympathetic terror-cry,
From ev'ry breast, is silenced simultaneously!—

* * * * * *

—"Stand back!" she gasped (as, in unseemly haste,
The Abbess toward her stepped to draw the veil,
Which flowing backward now her form embraced,
Over her features, quick-turned corpse-like pale)
"Stand back!—That wail! what was it?—Help! I fall!—
Oh, Jesu, mercy!—help me!—save me from this thrall!"

And Boura (who'd perceived th' appalling cry
Come from the Widow, falling 'mid the crowd

A pace or two before him), suddenly,
Stood by the postulant, and dared aloud
The Abbess to touch harmfully the fair
Bowed head whose locks she 'd seized to sever then and there.

"'Hold?' at *thy* bidding ?—Off dog ! " hissed a priest
(Sprung—as the Abbess stared in startled hate,
And the crowd's stir in silent wonder ceased—
White, to the rescue), "thy command (too late)
Though earlier had been vain as insolent !
Out! ere we drag thee, whining, to thy chastisement ! "

"I'm little used to wince and less to whine ; "
Said Boura, "p'rhaps, to strike is more my way.
The Postulant this honour will decline :
Nor wilt thou on her force, in open day,
Priest (warned aloud too in the public's ears),
A dungeon-blasted life of solitude and tears.

"Nor canst thou, now, unwatched, unquestioned, waste . . . . "

"Peace, idiot ! " broke in the fierce-eyed monk
As towárd Boura rushed in zealous haste
The shocked church-menials . . . .

But—with one word—sunk
In tone—almost a whisper—by a thrill
Of wonder—he struck both—Priest, Abbess—speechless—still,

And (while their Rome-taught, stern, conceited air
Of stoled assumption, or unbridled rage,
Changed to an abject, stupid, helpless stare)
Strode toward the porch where, striving to assuage
The Widow's anguish, or its meaning know,
The kind or curious watched her restoration slow.

Just stooping down to peer, among the rest,
For life returning to her death-palè face,
His startled thought her likeness strange confessed
To some one (somewhere, and in such sad case)
He 'd long since seen,—and he, at once, to be
Acquainted with her history longed exceedingly.

"Hush! Silence for your own sake, hers and mine!"
He said (his still, stern manner keeping off
A group in thought beginning to combine
His purpose there with hers, as, slow, 'mid scoff
And pity, she recovered).—"Let me know
Your grief anon!" he whispered, "I will aid you!—go!"

—Then, passing strange to one without its care
A witness of the whole had seemed the scene—
Boura (before the group became aware
That he had left it) watching, grave and keen,
Apart,—the group back-stealing, one by one,
To see how 'd end a strife so startlingly begun,—

The widow, tott'ring, as the ling'rers left her,
Towárd the hill, untold of what had passed,
Nor knowing Boura (who 'd well nigh bereft her
Of sympathy by that bold act his last),
Nor that, he, now, watched, wondering what she
Who' d checked the rite he came prepared to stay could be,—

And Boura, following her (unknowing both
Were followed by another), as she went
(To leave the scene of her excitement loath
And pondering what the whispered warning meant)
Resolved to wait the warner's promised aid
Gainst foes she deemed she'd found—of whom she felt afraid,

* * * * * *

## THE PLOT DISCOVERED.

NEXT morn.

The Widow's home.

Without, all drear.
Within, the dying.

She was sitting, pale
And motionless, a small, low window near,
Through which she seemed to watch the wailing gale
Weak flow'r-stems stripping, on the sodden'd plot
Of garden-ground around her creaking cot.

But one room had the home.—A sleeping nook
(Now open, with its curtain-screen aside)
Contained a bed which, with contriving, took,
By day, the couch-form. There, a sorrow-tried,
Disease-emaciated maiden lay
Waiting the heavenly summons—"Come away!"

Sad talk had they been having, and their souls
Were heavy, now, and silent, save when she
Who pressed the couch so wearily,
As round the bare and fireless den
Her glazed eye wandered, now and then

Sighed griefs to which the Widow (brave)
Some hopeful, low, brief answer gave.

And, so, the rap upon the door
Seemed more to startle than restore
Their vagrant thought:—yet, ere its sound
Had echoed their dull region round,
And dwellers, all along the lane,
Had peeped and closed their doors again,
A Stranger, come strange aid to win,
Was questioned, scanned, and suffered in.

—"The information that I seek,"
He said (continuing to speak,
As, leisurely, he placed a chair
The Widow'd offered fronting where
The light fell feebly on her face),
"Regards a complicated case
Of villany which you and I
Have met, perchance, to verify:—

"You do not know me, then?"

—A pause.

—The Widow shook her head.

"The cause
Of this my visit, let me say,

Is—that strange scene of yesterday
In the convent-church of St. Xavier.

"What passed you saw not. I was there
Disguised (nay! wilder 'd been your stare
Had you but heard each cry and yell
That followed when you shrieked and fell!),
And, when the group, outside, concerned,
Watched, curious, as your life returned,
'T was I that warned you to be still
And hope.—I 've hastened to fulfil
My promise you to meet again—
The more because I can explain
My motive so that you will keep
My secret—fair reward to reap.

—"'T would, p'rhaps, be deemed abrupt and rude
Were I, at once (my wish pursued),
To ask what, there, could move you so?—
—Yet, I might aid you did I know . . . ."

* * * * * *

". . . . Some years ago—for, *I*" (she said,
As thoughtfully she bowed her head)
"Begin, no prelude to my song
(Save this, 'My answer 's sad and long'),

I found myself the anxious wife
Of one more dear to me than life.

—"Two years (like months), in which I'd known
A woo'd one's joy in love, had flown,—
And, then, a third (a young wife's dream),
With love to worship wrought. I seem
Awaking to have been from bliss
To woe on woe from that till this.
—And, then—the spectre of my fate
Sat lowering o'er me, early, late,
And always, for, my husband's health
Went like a shadow,—not by stealth,
But seen, and suddenly.

"We fled
Toward softer climes (where, too, 't was said,
His skill of guerdon had good chance)—
To Carmaux, in the south of France.

"The light that led us there we blessed,
For, he got better. Yet, from care
We were not free (when are we ?).—Rest
Was needful for him, and, so spare
Was the provision he could make,
That, having, now, a nestling babe

Upon my bosom, I was fain
A tiny stranger, as its mate,
To take and nourish, for a fee—
Much helpful in our poverty.

"On swiftly goes life's story!—both
(I should have told you they were girls)
Were fated foster-babes to be,
And orphans, in a way to me
So madd'ning that, e'en now, I, loth,
Review it while my reason whirls.

"My nursling's mother went away,
In trembling haste, to tend the couch
On which its father, dying, lay
Where fevers breed, and monsters crouch
In jungles rank, beneath the ban
Of the baleful sun of Hindostan,—
And ne'er returned, or wrote, or sent,
To tell us what her absence meant.

"Before she could have reached Madras—
Her destination as she said
(I think she thought so)—I, alas,
With cause enough! to her had sped
A frantic narrative, all woe—
Of which it, now, needs *you* should know.

—"One day (it was an afternoon,
And summer-time—the prime of June,
Burthened with flower-scents—still and bright
As a fairy-realm left to the noon-day light—
With the little ones pillowed, and fast asleep
In a nook of our chamber, like buds, at the peep
Of the dawn, on a daisy-bank), hastening, I went,
On some domestic errand bent,
To a near neighbour, and returned
With anxious speed . . . .

"Oh, God!—I found—one of these little ones (my own one)—gone!—and shrieked—and fell!

I would not—dared not (so it then seemed) swoon!

I struggled to my feet, and, tottering, reeled away for help!

By strength of madness winged, I reached a neighbour's door, which, idiot-like, I strove to clasp within my arms—and failed—and fell again!

"The inmates heard, and rushed to my relief, with hurried questions, staring eyes, and cheeks with terror blanched!

My lips moved rapidly—convulsively,—my speech was gone!

So—pointing wildly toward my home—I ran, led, dragged them after me—until I stood, once more, before

the little bed—stupified—strengthless—still,—with folded hands—in statue-like despair!

"At night, when I at length returned
From death to consciousness, I learned,
Through sympathizing hopes expressed
In fear which ev'ry face confessed,
The child was lost—without a trace
Its doom of, or abiding-place.

"I'd known earth's hope by men (to die
Or grieved or glad) pronounced a lie—
That, childhood longed for youth, and youth
For manhood—womanhood, and these
For praise, wealth, power, till ghost-voiced Truth
Counted their winters while they shook
With fear to back or forward look—
That, kings felt decked to fill a grave—
That, kineherds o'er their lot would rave—
That, missing fame, fooled crowds had cried,
Each moment, 'Vanity!' and—died—
That, Time, to *any*, nought could give
Save power to pray uncrushed to live,
And pardoned Virtue, e'en—must wait
For gladness till a future state,—
But—*my* world-promise 'd seemed *so* fair
(So much a thing of course that care

Maternal), that (awhile forgot
The curse which clouds our common lot),
I'd clasped my baby to my breast,
Or bent me o'er its sleeping-nest,
And kissed and wept in overflow
Of thanks for bliss I *meant* to know.

"Could I have thought to lose *such* gain—
A solace *then* but got from pain—
The pastime of absorbing care—
The privilege of tears and prayer ?—
—My soul was crushed.—

—"*I* dare not tell,
In detail, what thenceforth befel—
How I nor grieved, nor joyed, nor prayed,
Nor roused me, till poor friends had laid
My husband in a lowly grave,
And, *then*, burst forth to curse and rave
At fancied treach'ry till, more sane,
I wept myself to rest again,
And *you* the story, long and drear,
Would patience lack, and time, to hear.

"He, my belov'd, at once had sent
Our tidings to Madras—but went
To heaven for an answer,—none
Had e'er reached Carmaux.

"I had done
With hope, for, one (a priest, 't was said)
Had come, and—proved the Aufords dead—
Claimed their effects, in form of law,—
And left their dwelling ('t was two miles
From ours) unoccupied.

"I saw,
Or thought, myself to deeper wiles
A victim, for—too near my cot
Strange men lurked.—

—"Then—the priest had not
(As he, I 'd heard, designed), as yet,
Sent for my nurse-child,—and I 'd met
With no occasion, fit, to show
Its mother's order to convey
It quickly, should she die, away
To Springleaf, to her sister,—so,
I sold my house-goods, here and there,
To simple neighbours (none aware
Of my intent), and—secretly—
Fled hither.

"I'd real cause to be
Confounded, finding them away
(This sister and her husband)! They

To Carmaux 'd written, I'd believed,
Just ere I left, for, I 'd perceived
Upon a letter handed back
(No Aufords then were there, alack !)
The Springleaf post-mark,—but no trace,
Thence, them of, found I, in that place,
Save this—to emigrate they 'd thought
Westward, and from some western port.
Doubtless, that letter, Fate could tell,
To Carmaux 'd carried their Farewell.

"I 'll not recount how fear of those
The baby's mother 'd shunned as foes
(And over-cautiousness, p'rhaps) marred
My efforts to find out its friends—
How cunning neighbours, cold and hard,
Whispered, 'Her *nurse*-child (she pretends)'—
How weak unfortunates (too glad
Of fellowship in woe to be
For my sake pitiful or sad)
Believed me worthless, willingly—
How wretched Scorn my murmurs blamed,
And Shame with me seemed less ashamed,
And Grief but seemed to think it just
That I should suffer what sin must—
Until I stole down here to stay
The scoffings, and they died away,
And we were called, the district o'er,

'Dame Linwood and her daughter Flor—'
—For, I should have to tell you, too
(If I the poor would justice do),
How (down-borne in the daily fight—
Menaced each morning, saved each night—
With faith the rich too seldom share
Stealing undoubtingly to prayer—
Knowing themselves His care who guards
Whom human selfishness discards—
Struggling against their discontent—
Heroic and beneficent)
Some fly to show the frail and sad
Such ruth as heaven *for them* has had,
And feel of sympathy a glow
The fortune-happy never know.
Brief let me be,—nay, let me break,
Here, off (lest all I weary make),
And own, that, had not failed my force,
Your caution to a silent course
Had ne'er prevented me from throwing
Myself, amid the sudden fray
At St. Xavier's mummeries yesterday,
Upon their victim's neck and (showing
Such proof as reckless priests may reck)
Declaring her my stolen child . . . .

* * * * * *

* * * * * *

—"In short—there 's little else," she muttered on,
(After a pause impressive, during which
She and the sick girl wearily exchanged
Glances that spoke and smiles which seemed to mourn)—
"*I* 've worked and waited till the hand of death
Is on me.—*My companion*, there, *you see*—
In all the luxury that she could earn
By way-side ballad-singing.—She 's aware
Of yesterday's event, and happy seems—
I know not why . . . ."

"You 'know not why'?"
The girl (up-starting, hastily—
With just enough of strength to lean
Upon her arm, but with a keen,
Triumphant courage in her eyes)
Burst forth (to their unveiled surprise
At the unwonted, haughty grace
In her pale, dark, and queenly, face),
"You 'know not why'?—then—is it nought,
This proof I'm not the waif fools thought?
That, you've a daughter found (to me
More than a sister)? Nought—that we,
Through all our wretched history,
Have sullied ne'er the name she bore

Or *that* she 'll bear, and, that, before
We join the crowds which cleave the air
Each moment, glad, from earth, to where
The golden fields the earth-gloomed bless,
We shall have seen His righteousness ?
Or, *nought*, to you, that, years of faith
In Him who from the Unseen saith
'Vengeance is mine' (your only light
A life-dream, as you said last night,
That—somewhen, somewhere—somewhat bred
From priestcraft would give up your dead)
Is guerdon 'd through the fool's display
You strolled to stare at yesterday ?—
—Why ! for such guerdon, I 'd again
Live o'er . . . . ! "

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. . . . and Father Redshaw 'd, then,
The wrong child stolen. The fair nun-house victim,
Called Lelia Auford, it did now appear,
Was Flora Linwood, and the ballad-singer
Poor Lelia was,—who, dying, gave her wealth
To Flor and Herbert,

As to the former she had lent her name,—
And Redshaw, thus, was foiled.

* * * * * *

Herbert and Flora did not long defer
Their nuptials,—though in '*mourning weeds*,' and sad
Profoundly, honouring Lelia's dying wish,
They sought, at once, a gentle Romish Priest
(So gentle, simple, earnest, soul-full, pure—
He might have written, in the orange-boat
Of Bonifacio, Father Newman's hymn,
'Lead thou me on,' or Faber's Christ-ward rythms),—
And—(in the faith in which they 'd nurtured been
Once wedded)—to respect their country's law,
Or own some conscience-scruples Flora had—
Before a parson, protestant, aged, loved,
'And passing rich with forty pounds a-year,'
Knelt, in a rural, 'ivy-mantled,' church,
And MARRIED were—IN BLACK.

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